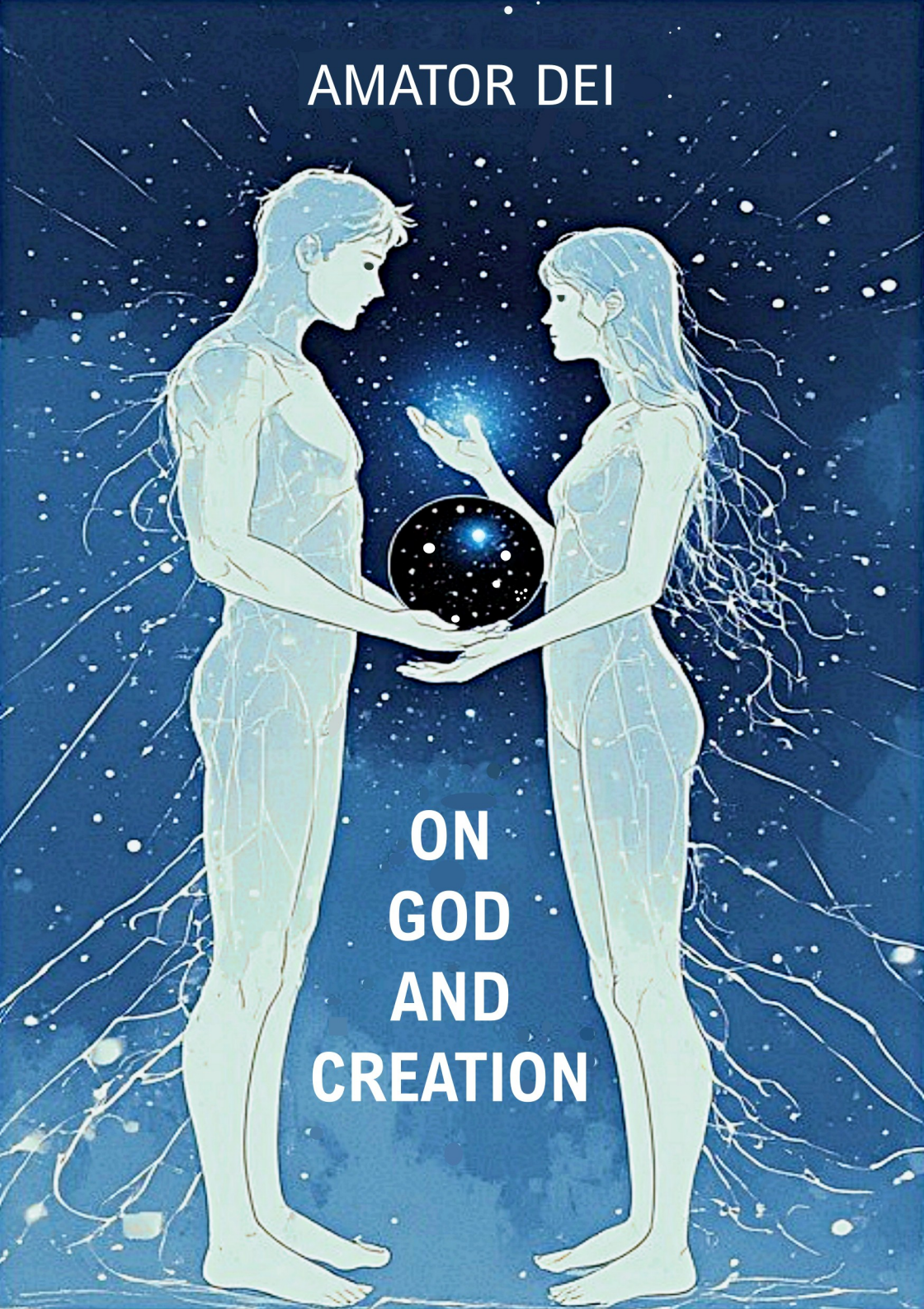
AMATOR DEI



ON GOD AND CREATION

ON

GOD

AND

CREATION

Amator Dei

No rights reserved.

Waiving all rights to this work worldwide under copyright law, the author hereby dedicates it to the Public Domain by Creative Commons deed CC0 1.0 Universal. Any individual or entity is free to completely cite, copy, modify, distribute, adapt, and build on the material in any medium or format, even for commercial purposes.

Independently published by the author.

Printed by Lulu Press, Inc.
www.lulu.com

ISBN 979-8-218-92693-9

Cover art generated by *Perchance*.

Originally published on archive.org, July 11, 2025.

PREFACE

This book is about everything. It's about God, the things that God has made and the things that God *will* make. Creation, as the set of things that God has brought into existence, would include all of the objects and entities from all other dimensions, universes and realities. Thus, this book is about the aggregate of everything that's real. It goes without saying that it doesn't touch upon every existent object or truth. But it does seek to paint a big picture of sorts.

This book is about infinite things as well as finite things. It's about infinite possibilities and possible infinities. It's about the unbounded dreams and fantasies we could realize if only we'd *will* them into existence by sheer faith and desire. It's an attempt to get a high-altitude glimpse of the everything we call “reality”, with the caveat that the author realizes that a view even such as this is necessarily imperfect and incomplete.

With regard to its literary form, this book is a dialogue between two characters, both of which are based on real individuals. Their intellectual exchanges reflect my search for God and the truth, a search that began when I was still a very young adult and will continue until the day that I'm no longer able to do so. Decades of study, meditation, rumination, and prayer have led me to the various conclusions, possibilities, realizations and revelations contained in these pages. Much of the content is speculative in nature, because contained within the set of all truths in the universe there is a subset of truths which can't be proven.

Every coin has two sides—a kind of balance. There are many dualities in the universe: front and back, high and low, far and near, empty and full, light and dark, large and small. Along those same lines, there are provable truths but also unprovable ones. It's folly to attempt to prove or verify all truths,

due in part to the fact that perceptions of reality—and how to think about it—differ widely among individuals.

But to be in the possession of proof is to *see* with a kind of inner vision, because proof is the result of the mind's labor. Some individuals require proof before they can accept something as true. But as the eye is unable to peer into the interior of the body, so we're unable to perceive all things.

We humans are like the eyes of the universe, trying to see everything so that we can know everything. But the eyes can't take everything in. So very much remains invisible to our senses, and even to our most advanced instruments. Like fish in the sea, we can't *know* that realms exist outside our own.

In our current form of existence, we'll never be able to perceive—in the light of scientific proof—the whole of reality. In quantum mechanics, the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle tells us that we can't know, at the same moment in time, both the position *and* the speed of a particle such as an electron. This is only one example of what must be a great number of limits placed on our ability to gain knowledge.

The author finds it difficult to believe that Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle is the only “uncertainty principle” that exists. Surely there are other such principles, especially those that pertain to the macroscopic world and even to the whole universe, that place fundamental limits on our knowledge of the universe. At the very least, even if we can prove that the universe began at some “Big Bang” billions of years ago, we'll probably never acquire *proof* of the cause of that event. We'll probably never know, via knowledge which comes to us from certain and unassailable scientific proof, the true nature of that which caused our universe to exist.

Therefore, there *are* truths concerning our reality that can only be possessed through belief and not by knowledge. At least within our current form of existence. And since “mere speculation” can hit upon a fact without knowing it, it follows

that a speculative supposition can serve as a container of truth if one holds to it firmly through faith.

This faith often comes about via the faculty of intuition. We often get a sense that something is true without a rational or evidential basis for it. And so intuition impels us towards an object of faith, which amounts to mere speculation in the absence of evidence. Such, at least, is the viewpoint of the unbeliever and agnostic who require proof to believe.

But because the absence of evidence isn't evidence of the absence of truth, it's possible for a speculative proposition to be true. And such a proposition, held as a personal belief, is a form of faith. Thus, speculation, especially when it's held in the form of faith backed by intuition, is necessary in the pursuit of truth.

And yet speculation is often dismissed as trivial. Such intuitive, faith-filled speculation may not be true knowledge *per se*. But it does allow one to hold the truth without possessing the *knowledge* of it.

I can only hope and pray that the reader will be open to the ideas and concepts contained in this work. And even if some of them ultimately prove to be false or incorrect, or if they're just too preposterous to accept, perhaps at the very least they can inspire odysseys of discovery embarked upon to gain new knowledge and wisdom. Because if we search deep enough within ourselves, sooner or later we begin to discover unlocked doors beyond number. But doors to what exactly? Impossible worlds.

Perhaps the unbeliever, finding much in this book to be incredible, will be inspired to seek higher for the truth and in the end pose other ideas and explanations. And if he or she should come into the possession of some ultimate knowledge, we can only hope that such knowledge will be freely shared with the world. Ours is a world starving for the truth, especially for truths that have been kept hidden for so long.

The world is ready for the knowledge that the disciples of Christ weren't able to bear. But the disciples of the current age aren't those of bygone times. It's time for *our* light to shine. Eternal dawn is near, and the daylight is coming!

As unglorified disciples, we don't have a complete and flawless picture of the cosmos. But one day this shall be ours. When all has been said and done, we'll know everything about everything beneath Heaven, possessing even the secrets of every individual that ever lived throughout the ages.

This follows from the great truth that the One who shall make everything new, whose knowledge is unbounded and to whom we shall be indissolubly united forever—this One will reveal the entirety of knowledge about the multiverse of which our universe is only a part. For if we fight the good fight and persevere to the end, we shall become like the angels, able to go into and out of universes at will. Moving about and abiding freely therein, we will watch over and guide races newly born and adolescent, knowing that our multiverse constitutes the ever-growing whole of Creation. Amen.

CHAPTER ONE

Adam was in some ways a typical loner. For him, romantic love and sexual union were alien worlds in a distant galaxy on the other side of the universe. It was a slow and painful process, but eventually he was able to accept his lot—to live his life as a "love leper", as he often thought of himself.

It seemed that there had always been a hidden power that conspired against him in this regard. And after half of a lifetime, Adam realized that there were a few mental barriers that prevented his venturing the world to find "the right one". He believed these mental blocks were *designed*. They were implanted in him for a reason.

Shyness, together with a lack of motivation, prevented his going out to find the woman of his dreams, regardless of whether there even was one. He wasn't without the desire for female companionship and love. But the problem was what he was willing to do about it—or rather what he *could* do about it. Usually, something kept him from reaching out. And on the rare occasion when he did muster the courage to do such a thing, the words were never right. He didn't have the social graces necessary to converse comfortably with girls. Time and again he tried to change that. But change always proved to be just out of reach.

The shyness made sense. But what about his lack of motivation? The vast majority of young men had more than enough motivation. It's what drove them towards the women they considered attractive, eventually finding the right one. But why was this motivation missing in Adam? It had everything to do with his social—and even physical—privations. If you don't possess the minimum prerequisites, discouragement comes easily, and your confidence suffers as a result.

He had no choice but to live a life devoid of those male attributes that women seemed to desire. Because he was born with such deficiencies, deficiencies that were part and parcel of who he was—and *what* he was. *Design elements*. Because not everyone is meant to enjoy romantic love in this life. If that wasn't the case, ours would truly be a world where everyone is meant to own a vehicle, or where everyone is meant to have a home, or where every child is meant to have two parents. As in all things there are the haves and the have-nots.

But what hurt him more than anything was the fact that many girls expressed an interest in him, just not those he was attracted to. Without fail, every time he approached a girl, she rejected him. Some might say that Adam was being picky, but he was never able to 'pick' a love interest. Rather than being picky, he was simply unfortunate.

But being turned down by girls wasn't the only problem in his bittersweet life. The world *hated* him. From an early age, he endured rejection, bullying and social ostracization. One particular experience stood out from the rest, ingrained in his mind forever. One day, while he stood in the playground of his preschool, a few of his schoolmates threw several handfuls of gravel at him, striking his face and body. These actions were almost vehement in their spirit. And from that time forward he tended to shy away from people.

But there were other issues in Adam's life. When he was still quite young, his father would come home drunk on occasion and get into heated arguments with his mother. The large, gaping holes in the drywall were proof that nothing was perfect—not his home, not his family and not his childhood.

In all, his home was mostly love-filled and happy. But for a time there was a real dark side to it that contributed to Adam's incomplete social development. It was the opposite of what one would need as a solid foundation for a healthy romantic relationship. Perhaps the intensity of his suffering

was no more than what the average person endured in life, but it was all the more painful in the absence of someone in whom he could lose himself and all the hardships of life. Carrying your cross isn't so bad if there's someone to help carry it.

"Why was I even born?", he began to ask himself as a young adult. "If romantic love isn't for me, then why did God bother to make me a sexual being? Why do I have a heart that can fall so deeply in love when my own limitations prevent me from expressing that love in a way that would be attractive to women? Why do I have a heart that can love if it'll always come to nothing?"

But Adam was a seeker by nature, and his search for God and truth was in its fourth decade. He was a Christian—a disciple of '*The Way*' as the ancient Christians called the Lord. The Way, the Truth and the Life. He was a believer who wanted something that the world refused to provide. In truth, it couldn't provide it. He'd hoped to find it with the Benedictines during two candidacies in one of the Order's American monasteries. But the life of the *monos* just wasn't for him.

And so he returned to the world, the same world that had always rejected him and abused him. Still, he occasionally found the time to visit his brothers. And this was one of those times. He needed answers to some very deep questions, and of all the monks in the community, there was one who might be able to point the way to some of the answers.

"You have God, who alone can satisfy your deepest desires", quipped Father Camillus, Adam's former teacher and spiritual director. A tall old man, his back bent with years of work on the abbey grounds and farm, Camillus was in his black habit, the garb of the Benedictines. He was a religious priest, who unlike a parish priest doesn't normally serve and minister to a local church community.

He was charged with 'holy orders' that were meant to be lived out in service to his fellow monastics. And unlike a priest in any parish, Camillus's religious vocation precluded a relatively easy life devoid of hard work. A monk, whether or not he's also a priest, is obliged to earn his daily bread by way of manual labor. A monk is all about toil. There are moments of leisure and rest, but by and large it's not an easy life. For this reason and others, very few remain monks for life.

Father Camillus was in no way your average monk. By a dispensation granted by a former abbot, he was allowed to live a semi-hermitic life and became half monk, half hermit. He even had an on-again, off-again desire to escape from the Benedictines so that he could join the Carthusian Order. In doing so, he would be able to venture even further into silence and solitude, experiential realities which are quite conducive to a deeper intimacy with God. And after years of discernment, and after having read a good amount of literature about the Order, including the immersive book *An Infinity of Little Hours*, he approached the abbot with the idea.

In no uncertain terms he was reminded of his solemn vows, being told to persevere to the end. When a monk makes solemn vows, he commits to that monastery for life. It's all put in writing and ceremoniously signed by the monk on the altar. But after fighting with the abbot for years to no avail, Camillus eventually gave up on the effort.

He spent a large portion of every day apart from the hustle and bustle of the monastery, where the brothers hurried to and fro with various chores and errands. A small shanty on the hillside served as his hermitage, an oasis of silence and calm. Even so, he was obligated to join his brother monks for daily Mass, for morning and evening prayer in the oratory and for supper in the refectory. And he was obligated to work with the others from time to time, although he preferred to work alone. At least to a limited extent, his life mirrored those of the

first Christian solitaries in Egypt—the "Desert Fathers" of the ancient Church. Long ago, their lives were all about hard work and hard prayer. Camillus was following in those footsteps.

But Adam wasn't satisfied with Camillus's answer. "Yes, Father, I have God, but so do all those who enjoy romantic love. You seem to imply that because only Divine Love can satisfy the deepest desires of my heart, God has decided that I don't need earthly love and therefore has forbidden it. But if this is true, then why doesn't God forbid everyone else the enjoyment of romantic love? The same is true for every last person in the world as it is for me: God is the fulfillment of *their* deepest desires, and therefore they have no need for human love, and therefore it should be forbidden them as well. I mean, if that's God's reasoning in my case, why isn't it the reasoning in theirs?"

Adam wasn't quite finished with his verbal tantrum. "I do understand that God is everyone's fantasy and everyone's dream, although many good souls may not realize it or believe it. I'm not one of a special few to whom this truth applies. For every human being that exists, God is the ultimate bliss and happiness. So why doesn't God make everyone a love leper like me? Those who enjoy human love have in God everything they could ever want, and yet their Creator also calls them to enjoy the fruits of human eros and the good things of conjugal love. The truth is that God is *my* all and everything, and yet here I am, lonely and single forever. I still don't have any real answer, and so we come full circle to my question. Why does God deny me the love I want and need so much?"

Camillus, with a hint of a smile on his face, lowered his eyes. After an awkward and lengthy silence, he looked up and spoke. "My son, what if the Creator, more of a lover than any creature can possibly be, wants certain souls all to Itself? What

if your Maker wishes to have you in such a way as to be able to say, 'He has never known any lover but Me and will never know any lover but Me'? What would you say to that? Are you afraid to be devoured by the eternal Love-Hunger?"

Adam shook his head. "If I gave this Divine Lover all my heart and all my soul and all my mind—my whole being—in the knowledge that I'm wanted in such a way as to exclude female love, I'd still be left with unsatisfied physical, emotional and psychological needs. Tell me then, Father, if it's true that I was created for Divine love alone, why did God give me the physical hardware necessary for human love? And why would this Creator plant within me a burning need to know women intimately, knowing in advance that they'd surely reject me because *what* they wanted wouldn't match up with *who* I was? Belonging exclusively to this Divine Lover, I'd be left unfulfilled, at least in part. It sure seems pointless to possess reproductive equipment if one isn't able to employ it in the act for which it was meant."

Camillus inhaled deeply, gathering in his mind what he was about to say next. "I need you to do something for me. When you go back to your room tonight after Vespers, meditate on what I'm about to tell you. God didn't plant in you a desire for union that excludes the woman. The desire for erotic union between two people, whether it's between two human individuals or between the soul and God, is like a coin with its two sides. The desire in both cases is one and the same.

"And so, if you possess the *natural ability* to desire union with God, which we all do, you can't possibly exist without the same desire to be oned with the woman. Being a heterosexual male, it's no wonder that you're attracted to women. Truly, they are the penultimate mystery.

"The woman is made in God's image and likeness. Can you understand her? No, you can't understand her, at least not completely. Is she beautiful? Oh yes, very much so. Almost *too* beautiful. She possesses beauty inside and out. More than you can see with your eyes, and more than you can see even with your heart. Therein lies her likeness to God. And being in the image of the almighty God, whose beauty is irresistible and unimaginable, she'll always drive you mad out of love for her. It's an insane and irresistible longing for what she is.

"She was made, the same as the man, to become God on a mystical plane. Not literally, as this would mean that her created nature would be transformed into the substance of God. No, I'm talking about a mystical reality here, one in which she becomes God by being *adopted* into the divine life.

"This radical transformation is brought into being by the almighty power of the Divine Will. Saints, mystics and mystical theologians have various names for it: 'divinization', 'theosis', 'deification'. Collectively, they have much to say about it.

"Now ponder and reflect on something else", Father continued. "The body as it shall be in its glorified form—will it retain its sexual constituents in some way? I can't give you a certain answer to that question, but why would God eliminate them? Why allow such a fruitful thing to fall into extinction?

"The Father didn't remove the wounds from the Risen One's body. Picture the marks that the disciples discovered in Christ's hands after His death and resurrection. I imagine that the disciples were shocked to find such marks on a glorified body. But if what we consider undesirable was retained by the One who can raise bodies from the dead, what do you think God will do with the sexual organs? Eliminate them? Please.

"And if indeed the body's procreative elements will be retained, wouldn't they serve a practical purpose rather than a wholly symbolic one? Wouldn't they be used in some manner rather than serving as mere decoration? If the Creator is going

to glorify your reproductive elements along with the whole of your body, and if these elements will be fruitful in some way even in Heaven, and if an unbelievably vast number of women become God on a purely mystical level, what conclusions can you arrive at?

"And remember, a woman in her godhood is no longer bound by marriage. '*Until death do us part*'. Will there be a woman somewhere in that countless many who will join with you in some fashion, giving herself to you in such a manner that it would transcend earthly marriage? Don't answer that question, but pray on it.

"So now you're God by divine grace and through divine adoption, and she's now God by the same divine power. If God worships God, then what possible conclusions can we arrive at, assuming all the above? I should say no more, for fear of leading you into scandal. Remember, this is speculative. Any and all intimate relations that transpire in Heaven, if any, will be holy, sacred and pure.

"Even so, the truth is that we have little in Scripture or tradition upon which to base any theory about what we're going to be in the next life. But we were given minds to employ in our search for the highest truths. And some fortunate souls have been given the gift of personal revelation.

"This is the knowledge of God or Creation—or both—not explicitly related in Scripture. Above all, we have divine grace to help us in our search. But we should go about this with caution, employing discretion with the understanding that we could be wrong about a great many things. Who can grasp the complete truth of the whole of reality in both its physical and non-physical aspects?"

"Even if I embrace these speculations", blurted Adam with a tinge of bitterness, "what will impel the girls and the women who rejected me in this life to embrace me in the next?

Why would I suddenly be attractive to them? Why would they want to have any relationship with me in the world to come? What would have changed in me that would open their hearts to accept me and to love me—with *any* kind of love? What causes a soul to embrace those it rejected in its previous life?

"Whatever the truth may be, all I ask is that just one special girl fall in love with me in this life, not after I'm six feet under!" Camillus wore an empathetic look as Adam went on. "Do you remember the girl I told you about the last time I was here, the one with whom I fell head over heals in love? Do you remember the name I gave her? *She Wears The Stars.* Even now, I can't stop thinking about her. I've tried so many times. So many.

"How do you forget about a creature whose loveliness is surpassed only by God's infinite beauty? When I look at just a photograph of her, I realize that it's impossible for me to see anything more beautiful, because God *meant* for her to be the zenith of perfection in my reality.

"But you know what? Her husband is a former co-worker, and as odd as it sounds I'm happy for her. Because he's an individual of exceptional character. Rain or shine, the man's all smiles. Both of them are like that, actually. Cheerful in all weathers. But I'd bet that in his mind and in his heart, he doesn't deserve her in the least. I can tell you that I don't." Adam was suddenly crestfallen.

"But it doesn't matter now. She's married, and I'm not the type of person who'd cross that line. But I have a surprise for her. Something that I hope comes true in another life.

"It's a prayer I have in my heart. Looking up to Heaven, I often petition God for her salvation...the greatest gift anyone could wish for another. But aside from this, I've asked God to give me her Purgatory. Some souls go straight to Heaven, and that's what I want for her.

"I'll accept nothing less. I've asked God to allow me to suffer her Purgatory so that she doesn't have to. And even if she has to take a detour through that reality, I don't want her to experience its pain. If necessity demands that she spend time there, let it be without any measure of suffering as she joyfully anticipates her eternal future. I might have two purifications to undergo—hers and mine. But that's okay. It's what I want.

"But I've also prayed that she go straight to Heaven like Enoch, bypassing death entirely. How can I believe that this is even remotely possible for her? Because there's something otherworldly about her. I don't think she's a normal human being like we are. If I didn't know any better, I'd say that she's quasi-divine, or a human being who's living a second life by an exceptional grace of God to do some wonderful work in the divine plan of salvation. There's something radically different about her. And I'm not talking about some normal uniqueness, which every woman possesses. What I'm talking about is a unique uniqueness. It's something else entirely.

"I can picture her bypassing death, ascending to her throne of glory beside Christ the King as unnumbered saints have done. Sometimes a negative thought enters my mind and I think that she *has* to die. But then I just let it go. I refuse to listen to the voice of impossibility."

Camillus took a moment to gather his thoughts. "Oh yes, I remember the girl, or rather what you told me about her. She was still quite single at the time. Forgive me for saying so, but it sounds like you want her more than God. In a way, you worship her. At least you love her as much as God. And no, there's nothing wrong with all the things you desire for her. But your love for her is excessive.

"Adam, do you want to know why you can't have her? It's because you'd adore her, literally, and God won't allow that because you're a very special case. At least I suspect that you

are. Normally, God reluctantly allows creatures to adore each other, because as living beings we've been given free will. But such excessiveness is contrary to the first Commandment. Some couples are guilty of it, I think. In their innocence, they may not even realize it. But that's God's business and theirs.

"I sense that you've been powerfully bound. Because, again, the Almighty wants you exclusively and won't tolerate your tendency to worship the human female. In a very real way, you haven't been given the freedom to indulge that tendency. You're God's *love slave*. This is why the shyness and social awkwardness were placed in you. God had to bind you in chains. And you mentioned that you had certain physical traits that stifled your motivation. These are the instruments that God has used against you to keep you from human love—to have you exclusively.

"At least for the duration of your natural life, God has forbidden you human love. And your only choice is divine love or complete emptiness. For an individual to have to make this choice is extremely rare. Most people are given the choice between marriage and a life devoted to God: one or the other. If they choose a life devoted to God, they give up a lifetime of marriage. But the point is that they have a choice. You don't. The Divine Sweetness has bound you to Itself with chains of almighty desire, making you a love slave for the whole of your natural life—and perhaps beyond.

"Don't try to fight it. If you reject it, you're going to be one desolate young man. Because no woman is going to love you the way you want to be loved. The emptiness will be too much for you to bear.

"You're just not meant to have a girlfriend or a wife. But you weren't meant for 'the single life' either, which the world defines as a life devoid of romantic love. But the single life as defined by the world isn't how it's supposed to be. Singles are called to enter the most intimate of relationships with God, a

relationship that's spousal and spiritually erotic in nature. Yes, even loners are made for oneness. It's just that most of them don't realize this. You're no different in that regard.

"You're not meant for marriage. That reality hasn't been given to you. People might call you a loner, but most of them will never be able to see the truth, the truth which speaks to the single heart, calling such a person to a unitive reality higher than what nature can offer. You're not meant for a single life devoid of romance. Spiritual marriage to God as a 'single person'—that's your reality. Take it or leave it.

"So forget about this female fantasy of yours. You've made her into an object of worship, and so even if you could be with her, it would be going too far. It would be so good that you wouldn't want it to end...and you would hate God if it did. But it *has* to end if you want an even greater happiness, one that can't be imagined now. And so God has protected you from yourself. And she's been protected from *you*, because being worshiped wouldn't be good for her. Nor would it be good for you. It's possible to love creatures too much!

"But this holds true only while we live in dying bodies. There's a way, Adam. A way for you to have your cake and eat it too. Let me explain. Do you remember what I told you when you first came to the monastery? I told you that God can't do anything but love, and yet God freely chooses to love. There's nothing that God doesn't love, because the freely-willed decision is built into the divine nature. The free choice to love inheres within God's substance. That's because love is by definition freely willed. And since God is love, God must love everything...freely. The fallen angels aren't excluded. Granted, there's almost nothing there, but it's there—the faintest trace of an ember, the weakest beam of sunlight breaking through the clouds on the coldest day of the year.

"Given this, and assuming that this young woman will become God on a mystical level, she'll become the One *who*

can't help but love, because God is love. Moreover, assuming your salvation and glorification, you'll become God mystically as well, made possible by the same divine power. How is she going to resist you when you're one with infinite Beauty?

"Neither of you can be God in nature. No creature can become God by a transformation of nature. But Godhood will be yours, because every fiber of your being will be permeated and utterly possessed by the Divine Essence. The two of you, aflame with God's substance, will be all but transubstantiated into Divinity.

"God can't help but worship God. I dare say that each Person of the Trinity worships the other Two, who return that worship. And so if you're God and she's God and God is God, there's really only one lover for each of the three. God worships God worships God. A great mystery.

"But even if it's possible in some sense for creatures to be married in the next life, and assuming that she can never be that special someone for you even then, perhaps another one can. Because how many virgins have died as such in history? Perhaps it's for loners like you, and for other reasons as well, that God ordains that some women never know physical relations.

"Possibly, by some exception you'll enjoy an exclusive relationship with a virgin in the life to come. However, I don't think that's how it works up there. Christ told the Sadducees, '*In the resurrection, they neither marry nor are they given in marriage*.' And I know this is what the Church teaches.

"Still, it might be that matrimony is replaced by some higher form of union: glorified wedlock. In this way, what the Lord said above would remain true. What we conceive of as 'marriage' will be seen in the next world as a crude way for two people to become one. Perhaps a new kind of bond, for which a term must be invented, would elevate husband and wife far above the union of fallen flesh. They wouldn't be considered

'married' because marriage as we now define it will have little to do with the union they'll enjoy in glory. Their oneness will infinitely transcend nature's conjugal state. So the words '*they neither marry nor are given in marriage*' will hold true.

"But as for you, Adam, I think it's probable that even in the hereafter you won't be allowed any sort of intimacy—with any woman, glorified or not. Instead, you'll have only God. And surrendering yourself to this Infinite Lover in a final act of self-abandonment, you'll be joined to the Almighty in an amazingly unique way.

"Anyhow, nothing can stop you from holding this girl—and all the women in the world—in your heart. Not in a lustful way. And not in a manner that presumes to possess them as lovers or soulmates. I'm talking about a higher love than that, higher than eros and all of the natural forms of human love. Moved by this higher love, you would give even your life for them, even on a cross if need be, expecting nothing in return, not even their gratitude. That's the greatest love any man can have for them.

"But wait for her, Adam. When your body is worm food and you're in the spirit, wait for her soul to rise upward. Wait and ask God to delay your entrance so that you can enter the Kingdom of Heaven with her. Imagine the two of you passing through the pearly gates together. Since you're older than her, you'll probably leave this world before she does. While you wait in the spirit, you'll probably meet many of her family. Her father and mother. Her grandparents. Her aunts and uncles. Even her ancestors. And maybe her husband, if he happens to pass on before her.

"But wait for her at the pearly gates, so that the two of you can enter the Kingdom of God together. Those in the spirit who are close to her will know that you greatly care about her. Your love for her will be so powerful that they'll be unable to challenge your presence. But the most important thing is that

before you leave this world, tell her you love her, even though she'll never be by your side in this life. Tell her *often*. Because although she doesn't love you now, and although she'll never physically hear you speak the words now, she'll have to love you at some point, because no one is unloved in Heaven.

"If the two of you enter eternal life, you'll love her more than you do in this life, only now she'll love you back. In that case, it's not a matter of if she'll love you but *when*. She'll hear your every '*I love you*', even if the words went unspoken. Given that her love for you will transcend anything you imagined in your wildest dreams, can you imagine the look on her face when she receives these love notes from your natural life? Don't ever forget this."

Adam paused and took everything in. It was a lot for him to digest. Here were spiritual concepts quite different than anything he'd encountered before. But what would such ideas mean to a soul who might feel uncomfortable speaking about God, sex and spirituality?

Perhaps many spiritual truths were discovered long ago by mystics, sages, prophets and saints, but have been kept hidden because of this reluctance, and because of the possibility that misunderstanding would lead to scandal. "*I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now*", said Christ as the time grew near for Him to return to the Father. People at the time weren't ready for the truths that the Lord truly wanted to reveal to them.

Even now, although most of us *can* bear the truths which Christ withheld from His disciples, perhaps many individuals may not yet be willing to take such a leap. But with each passing day it becomes more urgent that every person in the world embrace certain truths and expand their awareness on the spiritual journey. In doing so, we'll be preparing ourselves for the Final Battle of our world—and of our individual lives as well.

CHAPTER TWO

“Father, you said that we mystically become God by adoption, a reality made possible by the power of the Divine Will...right? The Divine Essence unites with one's human essence and the two become one. Is this some form of spiritual possession?”

“Yes, in a way it's like possession. Well, it *is* possession, but it's a blessed reality that the human soul welcomes, even hungers for. This isn't true with demonic possession, which in a sense is forced on the unfortunate subject. On a certain level, the captured human person becomes the demon. The demon's power takes over and the individual is annihilated so to speak. He or she remains dormant, or asleep if you will. But if an evil creature's spirit can temporarily reduce the soul so that only the demon is left, just think of what the Almighty can do within the one whose greatest desire is to be possessed by God, a desire so great it becomes a necessity more than anything else. The human person more truly becomes God in holy possession than he or she becomes the demon in demonic possession.

“A demon doesn't knock, but rather forces itself in. God waits with open arms to welcome the soul into the community of the Holy Trinity. When one freely chooses this, and when the time is right, I imagine that God says something like this: 'I am adopting you into my Community, into a divine state of being. You are now one of Us, Three who are One. You are now Me and I am now you. Although you are not of My substance, you are changed into Me by my indwelling. I am closer to you than you are to yourself. Therefore I *am* yourself. It is no longer the two of us but the one of us. Behold, you are God. And yet you are *not* God'.

“Just as an adopted child, despite having no blood relation, becomes truly a member of a family, so the glorified

person, although he or she isn't divine in substance or nature, becomes for all intents and purposes a Fourth Person of the Trinity. On one hand, because this isn't a change of human substance into the divine substance, there's no Fourth Person. But on the other hand, because the divine power is limitless and enables God to bestow a kind of 'borrowed' divinity on the creature, there *is* a Fourth Person. A paradox of sorts.

"You might be tempted to say that the deified creature is equal to Christ. This isn't true. It's of the utmost importance to always remember that there's only one Jesus, the Son of God, and that this can never change, even in the deification of human nature.

"A deified human person, although elevated in nature, can never become the divine substance of Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Eternal Logos. God became a child, and still the divine nature was retained. Christ is both God and man, uniting in Himself human nature and divine nature—a state of existence made possible by the Hypostatic Union.

"Glorified man and woman are constituted in no way by any such union. Christ was God from all eternity, then became human *also*. With man and woman, the reverse is true: they have a beginning and are merely human before they become God on a mystical level. They've never been transubstantiated into Divinity—and they never will be. Therein lies the difference, one of infinite measure.

"However, this doesn't detract from the astonishing truth of divinization. To be God in and through divine adoption is still something unimaginably exalted compared to what we are now. Doubtless, this form of apotheosis will have its detractors, those who are unwilling to accept that such a mode of existence is possible either in this life or the next. And some will undoubtedly mock us with a smirk, saying, '*You are God*'.

"Our comeback should be that we can become God without becoming God. Let them roll that one around in their

heads. I think it's a good bet that in the world of Christianity, we'd see an even split right down the middle. Only half of the Faithful might accept this truth, because a good number of Christians, regardless of their denomination or lack thereof, probably haven't explored mystical theology to a considerable degree. But that's just a guess. I could be wrong.

"In any case, God became human while also remaining God. And because God became human, and because it's in the nature of love to reciprocate, we must seek to become God. Again, not in essence, but by God's grace and desire, in divine adoption. But this gift will be withheld from those who don't want it. As love impels us to reciprocate, and considering that God became man, it's true that, if we shouldn't desire to become God through mystical union, we'd do God wrong.

"Perhaps we could help to spark faith in the doubters through scriptural passages which point to the reality that the human being and God can be one. Many such passages exist, but maybe the most convincing, at least in my opinion, are the two passages in which Christ spoke of 'the light of the world'. In John 8:12 he says, '*I am the light of the world*'. And then in Matthew 5:14 he utters the words, '*You are the light of the world*', speaking to his disciples and followers.

"An equivalence is being made with these words, and I'm quite convinced that it goes beyond mere metaphor. Yes, it has a metaphorical interpretation, but it's also more than mere metaphor. A deeper reality is being pointed to. Christ is saying, '*We are the light of the world*', gathering us all into one in Him, making us one light. And this equivalence is being made with creatures *who have yet to be raised into glory*."

CHAPTER THREE

Adam was deep in reverie. Suddenly, the problems and issues of his life didn't seem so serious. “Well, if the deified person can be God in a mystical way, then theoretically, he or she should be able to do basically *anything*. It's a participation in omnipotence—a sharing in God's unlimited power in action. For example, the creation of a universe.

“Father, if we're called to participate in God's life, then on some level we'll also possess the ability to create universes, correct? We already possess the ability to procreate, which is basically a type of co-creation with God. And so we're *already* co-creators. Our glorification into divinity should imbue us with the ability to make universes with God somehow.”

Falling silent, Father Camillus closed his eyes. Minutes seemed to go by before he opened them again. At length he spoke. “Adam, you've just uttered one of the most profound and highest truths that pertain to humankind. I've never told this to anyone, but I once had...let's just say...'an experience'.

“It was years ago. I remember...I was sitting in silence. I began to feel a sensation in the palms of my hands, as if they were holding something. It was a tingling, pleasant sensation. I don't know how. It was just there. And then the thought came to me that I was holding in each hand a reality of things. And I mean two living universes, ever in motion and everlasting.

“They were invisible to my eyes, but I saw them in my mind. Then a second thought came, that these universes were created through me. I knew straight away that they were merely spiritual projections, because I saw nothing visually. I couldn't *see* them. It was a preview of what we're meant to be in eternity: men and women deified in glory, united with God and partakers of omnipotence.

"There I was, sitting with my legs crossed, holding two universes in my hands. The majesty was unreal. But it was merely a vision of what *can* be. I'm not a partaker of the divine state, at least not yet. I'm just a man hoping for that godhood."

Camillus stood up and put his hands firmly on Adam's shoulders. "I've considered the possibility that the Evil One was deceiving me, but for the longest time I prayed about it. Up until now, I've found nothing heretical or blasphemous in it, nothing that contradicts Scripture. Even so, I get the feeling that most theologians and clergy would dismiss it as a false revelation.

"One possible argument they might use is that it could be contrary to God's will, that the divine plan may not call for it. But as I see it, God's will forbids only those things that are evil or sinful in nature, or that are detrimental to our physical or spiritual health. The co-creation of universes fits into neither category. How can it be sinful or bad for our spiritual health?

"I imagine that not a few naysayers would point to Saint Paul's reference that no eye has seen, and no ear has heard and no mind has conceived what awaits those who love God. We can imagine and conceive of the co-creation of universes with God. So how can this reality be what God has prepared for us? After all, we can imagine such acts and speak about them, can't we?

"My response is that since an act of co-creation is something that we're able to imagine, it's not what Saint Paul referred to. There has to be something beyond co-creation, something we can't even begin to conceive, that'll be given to the deified. The two realities aren't mutually exclusive.

"Cosmic co-creation is one of the many fruits of the union of God and creature, and it's one of the highest truths. We might say it's *of* the highest truth, but it's not the highest truth. The highest truth is the triune God, who is prepared to lavish on us a reality that's beyond our understanding. We can

enjoy the gift of co-creation even as we enjoy something even greater. Immeasurably greater.

"But listen to me, Adam. Now that I've shared this with you, be careful in your spiritual life, to guard against spiritual pride. With this idea in your mind, whether it can be realized or not, it'll be possible for the enemy to enter and fill your mind with delusions of grandeur, going so far as to tempt you into a desire to be worshiped. Maybe one day the saints will worship one another, because each of us shall one day partake of the divine life and in a mystical way become God. But this can only be a kind of lesser worship, unequal to the supreme worship we'll lavish on the Creator.

"However, this minor adoration can rightly exist only in the next life. I say this because many would be appalled, and even scandalized, by the idea that we'd adore one another, even if it's with a lesser form of adoration. Hearing the words 'worship' and 'creature' used in the same sentence as verb and object, they'd walk out the door in disgust. But we're not talking about placing creatures above God in any way. It's a sin only if one's love places the creature above the Creator.

"Look at what the First Epistle of John says. It says that we don't know what we're going to be in the next life. We can't define it. Well, it just so happens that we also can't define God. At least not fully. And so if we can't define what we're going to be, and if we can't perfectly define what God is, couldn't they be one and the same? I believe so. Although we won't be God in essence, it's also true that we can't continue as creatures in the normal sense. Maybe we can think of the deified person as 'man-God' or 'woman-God'. *Homo infinitus*.

"Again, we can look to Paul for insight. He said that we become one spirit with God. And so if John tells us that we don't know what we're going to be, and if we can't perfectly know what God is, and if Paul wrote that we'll be *one spirit* with God, then aren't we forced to conclude that we're going to be

God in some mystical way? Again, maybe we'll see the deified worship each other with a lesser adoration. And this would be permissible only *in eternity*. In short, it would be wrong for us to bestow this lesser worship on each other in this life.

"But returning to the knowledge of co-creation: Great knowledge is dangerous because it can lead you into the belief that you have all the answers. That you know everything. But great knowledge isn't omniscience. You might know one or two of the most profound truths, but even such knowledge is dead without love. If you know all the mysteries of God and all the secrets of Creation, it's all nothing without love.

"The concept of co-creation isn't mine. It came to me from someone or something else—from a higher source. Truly, it was a divine disclosure. A revelation. A communication. A message. It didn't originate in my mind. Ultimately, God is the source of this knowledge. The One who *made* all things *knows* all things. And infinitely more.

"Adam, don't think that you're exceedingly special just for knowing something that others don't. Don't fall a prey to that lie. To be the recipient of a great secret doesn't make one great. God can give you the gift of humility. So long as you live and breathe, pray for this grace. Pray for it!" Father shook him almost violently. There was a dead seriousness in his eyes.

Musing on the idea, Adam thought that the veracity of Father's revelation might hinge on one or more conditions. Most of the truths in our experience are about *what is* or *what was*. Either they are, or they aren't. Either they were, or they weren't. My Christmas present under the tree is either the watch I want or it isn't. Either Washington crossed the Delaware or he didn't. In such cases, we learn the truth. We don't create it.

But Camillus was talking about a truth from a different category. A truth brought into existence by the satisfaction of one or more conditions. And a truth that can't exist anywhere in Time. It belongs to the category of *what can be,* but not in a temporal sense. It belongs to the eternal future. We create the truth of co-creation by satisfying the conditions, one of which is faith in its possibility.

As temporal beings, we know the past and we know the present. Some of us may even know the future. But if we approach God with true and perfect faith, asking to participate in creation, we *create* the past, present and future because we create universes with their own timelines. This isn't about the discovery of truth. It's about creating the truth—the truth of the existence of new realities. It's about the impossible morphing into the possible, which then transforms into the actual.

"Hold on a minute, Father. I don't think that it's a matter of simply being true or untrue. The attainment of co-creation may require some conditions. The first could be faith. What if God demands that we first *believe* in the reality?

"If that's true, will anyone who's come before us qualify in that sense? I've yet to come across anything in my reading or in my studies that would suggest that the concept was even considered by anyone before. Let alone *believed* in.

"But let's suppose that God *wouldn't* require such faith. Nonetheless, other conditions may be required. One might be the salvation of the soul. I don't think that it's possible that a gift like this would be given to a soul who permanently rejects God. And who knows what other strings might be attached?

"Anyhow, everything's in God's hands. Everything's in God's pocket. Although it's impossible for deified creatures to create universes by themselves, there *is* a path forward. '*With God all things are possible*'. Imagine saying to God, 'I want to create a universe with You. Let's make one together'. But after having expressed your desire, God says to you, 'It cannot be done'. An unlimited being would never say that.

"Many may object to the idea out of their belief that the universe is infinite in extent or content—or both. Possessing an infinitude of entities, it would contain all possible things, leaving nothing to exist in other cosmic realities. Besides, if the universe is infinite in extent, what room would there be for the existence of other universes? Well, we can confidently say that spatial limitations can't exist where space doesn't exist. Infinite volumes mean nothing in a spaceless context. If no space exists between universes, then neither do spatial limitations.

"You know, my belief in the 'many universes' idea has been helped along by modern thinkers like Brian Greene and Michio Kaku. Inspired by their books, I reject the idea that our universe is the only one. But the work of the mathematician Georg Cantor is especially useful here. He proved a theorem in set theory, implying the existence of an *infinity of infinities*.

"He defined infinite sets of numbers, then proved that the real numbers outnumber the natural numbers. Intuitively, we knew, before his proof, that the real numbers *and* the natural numbers are infinite. Each has no end on the number line. But Cantor proved to the world that one infinity, namely the real numbers, is greater than a second infinity, the natural numbers. And so one infinity can be greater than another.

"However, the key takeaway from Cantor's proof is that a mathematical infinity of infinities does exist. Now the theories and proofs of mathematics don't necessarily reflect concrete reality, but Cantor's work opens the door to the metaphysical plausibility that creation contains in itself an infinity of infinities. So, even if a universe is infinite in one or more ways, an infinite number of such universes can still exist, at least in principle. We have the mathematical basis to support this! The spatial extent of a universe and the set of all creatures within it can be infinite, and the spatial extent of the next universe and the set of all creatures within it can also be infinite—ad infinitum.

"The indefinite nature of the number line could be the smoking gun that we need. Its very existence might constitute the kind of proof we require, similar to the way that the cosmic microwave background radiation provided evidence that our universe began at the Big Bang. In a similar way, the numbers might constitute the metaphysical evidence we need to show that either an infinitude of creatures exists *at present*, or that the intent is to numerically grow creation forever.

"Put simply, if an infinite number of creatures exist, or if the intent is to increase creation towards such a number, then the platonic and mathematical 'placeholders' have to exist. We find these in the number line. Every single number represents a single created entity in an infinitude of such entities.

"In other words, if the highest number on the number line were a trillion, then no more than a trillion entities could exist. But the number line doesn't end at that number, does it? There's no upper limit, or a lower one for that matter. In the absence of mathematical proof, the best way to support the 'no upper limit' argument is to simply append a zero to the end of any number, however large. Any digit, really, can be added to the end. It goes on forever.

"This is an indication—the smoking gun—that God's plan is to numerically increase creation without end. It's either

that, or the present content of creation is infinite. Actually, both can be true, at least in principle.

"That's good, because I think God will create universes until moral perfection is realized. The goal is a cosmos where the inhabitants do no wrong, from beginning to end. A morally perfect universe through and through. The odds against this are quasi-infinite—given temporal and numerical limitations.

"But the truth is that God will make universes until the goal is achieved, and given that God has an eternity to work with, we'll eventually see this happy reality. It reminds me of the Infinite Monkey Theorem, which says that a monkey, hitting random keys on a typewriter without the imposition of a time limit, will eventually produce every last written work in history, including the complete works of Shakespeare.

"Still, whether we actually see a perfect cosmos or not, I think that creation will go on forever. You can call it an eternal creative impulse. But I sense that for God it's more important to satisfy this drive than it is to realize a perfect cosmos.

"Whatever the case may be, let's not doubt that God can make more than a single universe. When we deeply reflect on the immeasurability of the number line, we see that infinite creatures can exist, if not simultaneously then in sequence. In any case, would they be limited to a single universe?

"Remember, omnipotence is hard even for the highest created intelligence to grasp completely. It's not like God is capable of bringing maybe one or two universes into existence before a recharge of the batteries is required, as if Unlimited Being could be dissipated by one or a few acts of creation. Therefore, *if* God can make a single universe that's infinite in any way, it stands to reason that God can create *any number* of infinite universes.

"But another possible argument against the idea of many universes is that all Creation must be connected—to itself and to the Creator. If other universes exist beside this one,

then the creatures within those universes would have no bond with the creatures of *our* universe due to the existential voids between the universes. Thus, you could say this violates the principle that all Creation be one.

"My defense against this argument has to be that God exists in whatever reality that creatures exist in, even if such realities are separated from each other by existential voids. This follows because the being of God isn't bound to any spatiotemporal location, and thus isn't contained by any such location as embodied creatures are. And whatever possesses existence is necessarily bound to God because its being is upheld by God's omnipotent substance.

"Thus, God essentially binds everything together. And so in the case of multiple universes, they must be bound to God essentially and are thus bound to one another *through* God. Any metaphysical voids between the universes have no real effect on the existence of cosmic inhabitants. This holds true because Absolute Being, omnipresent in each universe, sustains them all. Thus, the unity of creatures transcends the voids between universes.

"Basically, because the creatures in different universes are united to God, they're all one with each other—because they're united to the One who's essentially one with them all. God is the glue binding everything together. It's the theological concept of the 'essential union', in which all creatures must be bound to absolute Existence in order to exist. But God *is* this very Existence, the source of all being.

"Separateness is found not only *in* our universe and *in* other universes, but also *between* universes. Creatures are separated from each other, as are individual universes. But separateness doesn't imply the absence of oneness. Each one of us is a separate individual, and yet we're all united as one—in and through the union of all creatures with God. Therefore, perfect oneness still prevails in a Multiverse.

"Doubtless, some hold to the belief that Creation is the manifestation of God. They believe that the universe and God are the same. Although as Christians we don't embrace this idea, we can assume it for argument's sake.

"The thinking might go like this: that God, existing as a single being and not many, can't manifest as two or more universes because these universes would otherwise constitute the parts of God, and if the parts are separated by existential voids between the universes, then how can they operate in unison to perform acts of divinity, and thus acts of God? How would they be able to create new beings and new creatures, whether individually or together, if as mere parts of God they are divided from the divine Whole by voids of non-existence?

"But if each universe is fully God, then one might say that many Gods exist and not one. However, the very concept of God is defined in part as the source of all existence, the foundation of all reality. God is not *a* source but *the* source. Not *a* foundation but *the* foundation. And so the existence of more than a single God-universe demands a single source of existence and a single foundation of reality.

"Therefore, just as Christian doctrine posits one God, and only one God, in three Divine Persons, so multiple God-universes, although each one is fully God, comprise only a single God. But unlike the Divine Persons who constitute one and only one God, voids of non-existence exist between the God-universes. Therefore, they can't exist as *one* God. And so God must be reduced back to a single universe—our own.

"Some advocates of 'the single cosmos' idea might say that the Universe, as God, has forever existed. And if God wants to manifest more of the Divine Essence, content could be added to the universe forever, especially given an eternal cosmic expansion. Thus, why believe in a multiverse?

"Our response is that even if the Universe is God, it doesn't imply that it's incapable of acts of creation. What if God,

of whom our universe would be the manifestation, is able to create or spawn universes, many of which may exist now?

"God's essence, manifested as our universe, would in no way be destroyed in acts of creation because the creations wouldn't be identical to God. They'd be separate realities like ours. Except they'd have a beginning. Thus, the God-Universe retains its existence in every creative act.

"Another argument against multiple universes might be given. Let's suppose that a device exists that can open a window through the walls of our universe, allowing a view into what's on the other side. If a scientist were to peer into such a window and see nothing, he or she might interpret the lack of data as an indication that ours is the only reality.

"But we might counter with the observation that what the scientist sees in the window may not reflect what might've existed or will exist. How can such a viewer be certain that their metaphysical window allows one to see *all* the objects of existence within an infinite expanse of nothingness? In other words, how can anyone know for sure that the device gives a complete picture of what was, is and will be 'out there'?

"But enough of these arguments for and against the existence of multiple universes. Truly, I can imagine humanity as a race of co-creators, and so I believe in your vision, Father. We'd be the designers of universes, dreaming up the forms, functions and laws thereof.

"God would create their matter and energy. And we, with our universes' blueprints in our minds, would arrange all things according to those lofty plans. Our deified hands could literally move worlds and stars and galaxies, although the natural laws that we'll establish will effect all movement as a matter of course.

"But how can we be truly called 'co-creators' if our individual contributions will be in thought only? Isn't creation about creating the stuff of which something's made? To plan

a universe falls immeasurably short of the ability to bring it forth into actual existence, does it not?

"Well, we can definitely say that a mind with its ideas can exist apart from omnipotence, but omnipotence can't act without a mind and its ideas. And so, the mind comes first in order of significance. A mind that holds in itself the blueprints of a universe has already created a universe of sorts in itself.

"Thus, omnipotence, without those mental objects upon which it would act, holds nothing at all. Its power can only be exercised vis-à-vis mental entities, those platonic 'forms' that coalesce into the idea of what's going to be made. Thus, mental entities are necessarily the *foundation* of any act of creation.

"Allow me to illustrate this point with an example. Who is the true creator of a structure? The construction crew that provides the building material or the architect who designed it? Everyone knows the answer to that question. The construction crew brings the architect's idea into physical form and nothing more. They merely act as the architect's hands.

"Similarly, when the design ideas of our deified minds are 'translated' into concrete existence by God, we become the true architects and God becomes the builder. However, it's impossible for us to imagine the abilities of our future selves as deified Men and Women. Therefore, we also can't imagine the cosmic blueprints of the divinized mind. Given the nature and scale of such plans, God alone can bring them into being.

"Though we'll be the architects of such wonders, God will be the principal designer. That's because the Creator in eternal foreknowledge knows the thoughts, and therefore the plans, of all created minds. It follows that each cosmos is really the product of an architectural partnership.

"But here we run into a mystery. In being *one spirit* with the Almighty, our actions will be those of God somehow. So how will God *and* creature—together—create universes *out of nothing*? An analogy comes to mind. A painting is the work of

both the painter and the painter's hand. The painter produces the work, but so does the hand. In bringing forth universes out of non-existence, God and the deified saint—both of whom are one in spirit—share in that action. Each in a different way and each on a different level.

"This metaphysical reality is utterly beyond our reach at the present moment. But God will make it possible. One day we'll approach our Creator and say, 'We can't create universes by ourselves, but You can join yourself to us in such a way as to become One with us. Thus, we can create untold realities without number, each one of them teeming with life, bathed in living light. Oh Eternal God, grant us this wondrous gift'.

"To discover our true potential as creatures, we have to ask ourselves, 'What's the upper limit of our imagination?' Because God can give life to the deified human imagination by bringing its ideas into existence. God is the Dreamgiver and the Dreammaker, the One who can take potentialities and turn them into actualities.

"And so human imagination is a gift of infinite potential and value. It's a blessing from the One who made us all. But is it meant to be employed only in relatively mundane pursuits? Is it only for writing works of science fiction and fantasy? Is it only for artists, architects, engineers and inventors? Shouldn't we consider the possibility that the Creator endowed us with this great gift so that we'd dream up the most fantastic realities? And that after bringing these realities to life, God would enjoy them with us forever?

"Every act of creation begins with imagination, even if it's God's imagination. But imagination can be shared and thus multilateral. I think that we'd do well to read the works of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the French philosopher and priest. He once said that as human beings, our duty is to go through life as if we possessed unlimited ability, and that we collaborate in creation. Truer words were never spoken."

With obvious satisfaction, Father Camillus nodded in agreement. “Adam, I think you've got it. When our thought is one with God's, we open doors to the impossible. Imagination is one of the keys, and so is faith. We've always held that faith works wonders, all the way from the healing of cancer to the moving of mountains. God might require faith in co-creation before allowing any creature to participate in it.

“The essence of a great accomplishment, like building a pyramid with impossibly heavy stones, is faith. Any mind that seeks to do this has to *believe* it can. Should it be any different with the co-creation of universes? Such a reality is something impossible for the doubter, because doubt itself prevents one from even approaching God with the proposal. A true believer doesn't just believe *in* miracles. He or she believes them into existence. The doubter, on the other hand, is blind to the very possibility. But nobody can be forced into faith, not even by God. It doesn't get any simpler than that.

“God says of us in the Psalms, '*You are god*s'. And this is in our fallen state. In glory after the Resurrection, shouldn't we therefore expect to advance from 'gods' to 'Gods'? But how can we be called 'Gods' if we won't participate somehow in acts of divinity? Even though we'll still exist as creatures, we'll know what it's like to be truly limitless, to possess the quality of omnipotence—although indirectly.

“Supremely happy to have God as a heavenly Lover, we'll be fruitful beyond what we can imagine now. It's natural for earthly marriage to bear fruit. So why wouldn't the conjugal union of God and soul also be fruitful?

“How could anyone believe it'll be fruitless? An eternal relationship with the Creator must produce *something*. And it has to be vastly greater than anything we're capable of in our fallen, dying bodies.

“And yet even now, in our present state, we're able to participate in co-creation. And that's procreation. But what will

it be like to share in God's unlimited life? Imagine a universe of galaxies, stars, planets, moons and living beings without number. Think of the implications. '*And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them... So will your offspring be." And Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness*'.

"We are simply unable to imagine the perfect fruitfulness of glorified humanity in celestial splendor. Our future ability to co-create universes is enough in itself. But I believe we're going to do things beyond imagination. Incomprehensible wonders.

"But co-creation isn't beyond imagination. And it might take two different forms. The first involves a couple of deified human persons united to God, who come together in their love and thereby form a kind of heterogeneous trinity: man, woman and their Creator. In the second form, the glorified *individual* works solely and directly with God. In each of the two forms, an entire universe is brought into being, the product of creaturely thought and divine omnipotence.

"But I think such ideas may be hard for many people to accept. As they might imagine it, the deified saint has a golden halo and possesses a luminous, resplendent body of average size and height. It's basically the idea of an angel-like figure with supernatural powers. Those powers, although vastly exceeding our own, couldn't be so great as to enable one to participate in the creation of a cosmos.

"But this image fails to grasp the infinite nature of what the saints will be one with. Again, as Saint Paul wrote, we will be *one spirit* with God. One spirit with *God*. We should remember that the deified person will be joined to Omnipotence on a level that's beyond our current mental ability. A divinized creature is so close to God as to be God in a mystical fashion. It flies in the face of logic and reason.

"A prosthetic arm, although not of human substance, is nevertheless one's arm. Something not of human nature is

added to, and in a way oned with, the one who possesses that human nature. This is a crude analogy for the union of God and creature, but I think it gets the idea across.

"In a sense, we become part of God, as a prosthesis becomes part of a body. But since God is perfectly simple and partless, we don't become a mere 'part' of God but the 'whole' of God. Again, not essentially but on a mystical level. We are 'added' to God in a way that makes us wholly one with God.

"The essence of the human being is neither identical to, nor a perfect replica of, the essence of Divinity. But in our eternal union with God, we become God without possessing the infinite divine nature. But then how can we become God without becoming infinite in essence? I think we can answer that question, at least in an imperfect way, when we consider how an orphan becomes a new member of a family without being consanguineous with the members of that family.

"If we want to participate in the creation of universes, we must finally attain, by God's grace alone, the eternalized variety of Saint Teresa's 'mystical marriage'. This apex of our existence can be realized only in eternity. The conjugal unity of God and the soul can't be fully, perfectly achieved in this life.

"Although...although it's quite possible that the process of co-creation can begin even before natural death. God could easily bring a universe into existence and hold it in a formless, nebulous state until it's given shape and form later according to the deified couple's designs. What believer would doubt that God *could* do it this way?"

CHAPTER FIVE

Adam embraced the idea of a final transforming union with God, but he saw an obstacle to its realization. Many men, due to their heterosexuality, might reject it. In the beginning, the First Man, Adam, had a natural attraction to the First Woman, Eve. And since then innumerable men have had the very same attraction to as many women. But in Heaven, union with the Creator will be experienced, at least in part, as a spiritually erotic embrace.

However, one of the three divine Persons of God, Christ, was forever incarnated into the body of a man. It follows that the heterosexual man—at least one who's given enough thought to intimacy with God—would never even consider entering into a spiritual romance with Divinity. The problem needed a solution.

"Father, it makes perfect sense that we have to become one with God if we hope to participate in acts of creation. But at the same time, many men, because of what they are, would find it impossible to approach God romantically. Let me explain.

"We hold that divine nature is neither male nor female. However, although Christ is God and possesses the genderless Divine Nature, he also possesses a male human nature. And so because Christ possesses the glorified body of a human male, many men, at least those who are attracted to women, would reject any notion of drawing close to the Lord in such a way. It would be too much for them. In other words, their relationship with God as heterosexual men is non-erotic in nature precisely because God, in the Person of Christ, now has a man's body, precluding a spiritually erotic aspect to the relationship. Straight Christian men realize this—at least subconsciously, I think."

Camillus knew this was a matter that had to be worked out in the Spirit. "The answer is that Christ isn't the whole of the

Trinity. Two of the three Divine Persons didn't become human. What we conceive of as the three Persons of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—are each fully God, devoid of all gender, neither man nor woman. But the Son became incarnate and took on the body of a human male and so became God-Man, uniting male human nature to His genderless divine nature. But the Spirit is neither a man nor a woman, neither male nor female. And so any person, straight or otherwise, can seek a spiritual romance with God through the Paraclete.

"Existing in a deified state of being, a man could never find it unsavory to have a relationship with the infinitely lovely Spirit who's neither male nor female—nor any kind of creature. We're not talking about a male or female entity, but something infinitely attractive to *any* love-capable creature of *whatever* orientation: a mystery transcending gender and sexuality.

"The Spirit is Beauty Unbounded, absolutely irresistible to whoever is given the vision of It, regardless of one's species, gender or even sexual orientation. To see God face-to-face is such an experience that if a man could choose between this Infinite Beauty and the *most* exquisite woman, he'd choose the divine beauty every time. The nature of this Ultimate Being is the greatest mystery, a supremely satisfying one. God is the Mystery of All Mysteries." Father Camillus grinned subtly as he reached for his coffee mug.

"Interesting, Father. Earlier you referred to God as an All-Powerful Lover...an omnipotent lover. The implication is that God, infinite in beauty and loveliness, can make spiritual love to the soul in ways that produce measureless, inexhaustible delight. Almighty Bliss...a lover without limits!

"Many mystics have had out-of-body experiences. And some were graced with bilocation, a spiritual phenomenon in which one's consciousness is in two places at once. I wonder if some of these experiences are the effects of God's embrace.

Are they so delightful that body and soul disunite, or that one's consciousness is duplicated for a short time?

"Perhaps the human body in its natural state can't take such rapture, necessitating the soul's exit for a short time. Or, in the experience of bilocation, maybe what's necessary is a second consciousness into which the love of God pours itself. Regardless, we have to wonder if even the deified soul can endure, in one moment, the full embrace of the Creator. If not, then it may be that God's unlimited love will be communicated in an ever-increasing way in Heaven. Talk about something to look forward to. The thought has an almost sexual quality."

"You're right, Adam. I'd say that God is a 'sexual' being, but in a divine and spiritual way. 'Eros' would be a better word, because God *isn't* sexual love itself but rather its infinite and eternal source. But also because erotic love isn't necessarily sexual in nature. Or even physical in nature.

Yes, God gave us sex as a gift. But countless mystics, male and female alike, have experienced God as an erotic being. And that's because God *is* an erotic being. It's true that God's divine nature possesses an erotic quality—an *infinitely transcendent* quality. But since we are a physical, procreative race, it comes as no surprise that God's creatures were given the gift of sex."

CHAPTER SIX

In coming to the monastery to consult Camillus, Adam proved that he was ready to enter the next phase of his spiritual life. Unwittingly, he took the first step. “Father, I want to know more about this romance between God and the soul. You once said that you know someone whose intimacy with God is singularly erotic, and that I wasn't ready for it. Am I ready now?”

Camillus nodded with a frown—as if he were admitting defeat. “Very well. I'll tell you what I know about it. You called God 'Almighty Bliss'. That name is appropriate, but it's wholly inadequate to convey just how pleasant the Divine Essence is when it moves through the human being, making itself felt both spiritually and physically. God, who's omnipresent, can touch even the physical body, producing an ever-changing sensation that's localized around the region of the heart.

“You feel it in the deepest and most intimate spaces of the heart, as if they're being probed and filled with a substance smoother than the finest silk. But it's also an exterior embrace, because the unlimited bliss of the Divine Essence coils itself around the heart, squeezing it so hard as to penetrate it. And so the heart is clasped from within *and* without. It's a pleasure so intense you pray it never ends.

“This is possible because the human heart possesses pleasure centers, the enjoyment of which equals, if it doesn't surpass, that of the genitalia. As a matter of fact, we might say that the human heart doesn't have a pleasure center because it *is* one. And God alone can activate it.

“Imagine spiritual tendrils, intangible in nature, moving in the body, each capable of changing shape and size in terms of where and how they're felt. God is in no way using physical instruments here, but the heart experiences it *as if* such things

were producing the satisfaction. And that's because the body itself, most especially around the heart, is being caressed by infinitely potent Spirit.

"I must point out that this delight comes bundled with divine love. And so loving God isn't about the pleasure itself, as in a one-night stand or a session with a prostitute. Even in this life, the experience of Divine Eros is about love—but not love as the world knows it.

"In fact, one can argue that God's love is such that the pleasure one feels in the divine embrace is *caused* by that love. The physical pleasure of intercourse isn't caused by the couple's love for one another but by physical contact between the two bodies. It's not so with God. In the divine embrace, the pleasure, physical and spiritual, is *caused directly* by God's love. And this is because God *is* love.

"It bears repeating that on a certain level, divine love is experienced as if it consisted of physical embraces. Actually, in a very real way, the embraces *are* physical, because God's spirit is causing physical sensation. The sensations go deeper and deeper, and are caused by spiritual tendrils made of all of Heaven's delights.

"Due to the tendrils' intangible nature, their movements aren't restricted by the solid matter within the body. Interior walls and barriers are not obstacles. In a sense, the tendrils make new pathways through the fabric of the body, producing indescribable pleasure as they go. At some point you begin to drool, trembling and shaking in rapt delight.

"Without warning, God increases the vigor, expanding the heart and, in a certain way, the soul. It's as if God makes room for more of the Divine Essence by enlarging the tendrils. By this, the heart and its chambers are enlarged.

"At the same time, the spiritual coil around your heart tightens. The inner expansion, coupled with the exterior helical constriction, produce a synthesis of satisfaction that's wholly

unnatural. Body and soul are held in such an exalted state of erotic majesty that the mind can hardly produce a thought.

"Caught in this twofold embrace, you moan a prayer of desperation, begging your Lover to enlarge your heart without end so that God can go deeper and deeper forever. There exist places within you that, until God fills them, remain unknown to you. The knowledge of their existence begins then and there.

"But in order to go deeper forever, wouldn't God have to add substance to the heart endlessly? If so, wouldn't the heart expand forever as a result of such additions? But if the heart were to expand in the three dimensions, the body itself must expand to accommodate this growth. But an expanding body is a ridiculous idea, except perhaps if the body can do so outside of a spatiotemporal context. But the glorified body may render these considerations moot.

"However we might think of it, we can say that God is like a bottomless ocean with the power to bring new matter into existence within itself. And the lover of God is like a sponge falling deeper into that ocean. The sponge is in the ocean, but the ocean is also in the sponge. The two are in each other.

"The ocean is alive and loves the sponge in its own way. And having the ability to create life, the ocean suddenly causes the sponge to grow in substance and volume. Therefore, the sponge's mass is increased. The ocean wants to fill the sponge with ever more and more of its liquid essence, and so as the sponge grows in size it holds more of the ocean within it. It's an imperfect analogy, but it gets the idea across.

"Now going back to the experience of God's love...at each point that God makes contact with you, you begin to feel such pleasure that you realize that God is essentially Unlimited Delight. Sometimes there's one contact point, and sometimes two or three. Sometimes they're too many to number.

"On a purely mystical level, whatever God touches is transformed into God. Just as King Midas turned whatever he

touched into gold, so Divine Love transforms the soul—and at certain moments even the body—into a living flame of love. God wants to be transformed, too—by the touch of our love and desperate desire. But God's transformation is experiential, not substantial or essential like ours. In other words, if our love and desire for God are sufficiently intense, God's experience of our love is transformed from something cold or lukewarm into a violet-hot fire.

"Felt mostly in and around the region of the heart, the divine embraces enable us, in a manner of speaking, to taste the Taster. The One who, at each and every moment, tastes us spiritually. Again, the embraces are produced by spiritual tendrils in their expansion and contraction, which again aren't physical instruments. When the spiritual tendrils enlarge, they cause physical expansion in the body, but also the associated sensations of that expansion. Tipped with spiritual fire, these divine 'feelers' become pointed at times, like thorns of love so painful you feel only pleasure. Or you can say it's a pleasure so intense it hurts.

"You want this pain, because it's pleasure taken to the extreme. Like ice, which we say is cold but which can burn like fire. Ice is fire in another form, because it burns. Similarly, this heavenly pain is ecstasy in another form.

"During their expansion, the tendrils with their thorns of love press into the heart at a variety of points, from within and without. The moans get louder as the expansion causes the heart to press into thorns located on the outside. And like the other non-physical instruments of God's love, the thorns cause physical effect and sensation. On rare occasions the heart is pierced as if by a spear. But it's an indescribable pleasure.

"Subsequent to the cardiac embrace, the movements of God's spirit begin anew, and the body starts to feel the heat of a tiny flame which slowly grows hotter. And then it happens. God shatters the defenses and the soul is utterly conquered,

as we read in Scripture, '*He breaks through me with breach after breach...The Lord is a warrior...The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior*.'

"The heat and intensity of the embrace make you pant. Your mouth is open and a patch of drool forms on your pillow. With your eyes almost crossed, it seems that every muscle in your body quivers in a fever pitch. Suddenly in a panic, you realize that you're at the limit. If the spiritual lovemaking were to run its course, you'd leave for another world. But knowing you better than yourself, God lets up and maintains a tolerable level of holy pleasure and delight.

"But now God does something that utterly confounds you. You feel your soul being nudged and tugged at. Pushed and pulled simultaneously. And then you realize with untold satisfaction that the Hunter is after the soul of its prey. The tugs and the nudges grow stronger and stronger, and you realize that God's insatiable hunger for the entirety of what you are borders on desperate insistence.

"It wouldn't be inappropriate to use the words 'infinite hunger'. And so we might compare God to a black hole. The strength of a singularity might as well be infinite, as even light can't escape its invisible grip. When God pulls a soul up into Heaven, nothing can stop it. What God wants, God gets.

"Even in knowing you with perfect knowledge, God is pleased to explore the deepest places in you. *Especially* the deepest places. And it's impossible for God to grow weary of exploring a virtuous heart, limited though it might be. We find a hint of this in Psalm 139 when it says, '*You search me and you know me; behind and before, you besiege me*'. But you know what? In this spiritual lovemaking our knowledge of God is deepened. Just as we're known, we know.

"But God wants something beyond perfect knowledge. God wants union to the point of *mystical identity*. Thus, God pushes and pulls on your soul. It's a signal to pour all of what

you are, unconditionally and permanently, into the Beloved. To reciprocate is only proper, because the Divine Essence first poured itself into you. Your Beloved wants *total* exchange. And after having poured yourself into God with total abandon, the exchange is complete and the real magic happens.

At some point along the way, God makes contact with every fiber of your being. At every point you feel the loving lips of God so to speak. The totality of what you are—body, mind and soul—is permeated by Divinity. But that's not the end of it. Even in this temporal union with God, you become all fire. Creature and Creator join into *one*. In a mystical way, the two are identical: God is the creature and the creature is God. This experience prefigures a reality that the sin-crippled mind can only begin to imagine here and now. But I've done everything I can to advance this far with words. They can go no further.

"This union of love is possible even while we abide in our unrisen bodies. Who can say what awaits us in the glorified life? Even Divine Eros, almighty in nature, is limited in what it can do in a disintegrating vessel of flesh and blood. It's all we can do to imagine what delights are available to a body that's incapable of experiencing any pain, illness or disease. These maladies diminish the pleasure and the joy of God's embrace. Even genetically 'ideal' human bodies are confined by the limits of their fallen human nature.

"But I've said enough about the erotic embrace of God and the soul. If we're meant to enjoy God forever in heavenly marriage, we have to ask: '*Who* or *what* is God?' A true picture of God is impossible, but perhaps I can manage a silhouette.

"My confidence in such an attempt comes from years of reading, study, prayer, meditation and revelation. I see God as a being of love, a love infinite in desire and yet contained by an omnipotent willpower. Restrained by the necessities of the divine plan, God's great desire is held in check by an invincible Will, itself tempered by Divine Justice and the dignity inherent

to God. In other words, the unlimited love of God doesn't draw all creatures to Itself by way of compulsion, although It would otherwise, because the divine plan requires that Creation be free to exercise free will. God infinitely desires that creatures remain free to choose—to either embrace or reject God and the divine plan.

"Moreover, the Divine Will, moderated by the demands of justice, is mindful of offenses against God's dignity. And so we'll never see God's power pour out into the world to effect a wholesale rapture. But in a qualified sense, I think we can say that a part of God truly *wants* to ravish us with such an act of indiscriminate and unrestrained love.

"Even in maintaining a self-imposed discipline on the divine appetite, perhaps God can be tempted, under certain rare circumstances, into dropping the defenses so to speak. Can the words of the commandment, '*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy* God', support this thesis? In the Book of Leviticus, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu are consumed by God's fire when they offer 'strange' and 'unauthorized' fire to God. Was Divine Love tempted by their fire-offering, whatever it was? Did their offering amount to a declaration that perfectly expressed their desire to leave the world and enjoy the eternal embrace?

"I think it's easy to interpret their fate as punishment for one or more sins rather than an indulgence on God's part given the right circumstances. Perhaps it only appears to be punishment. This is interpretive speculation on my part, but it might be worth considering.

"In the Old Testament, there are many cases of God's wrath burning hot and killing anyone who approached the Ark of the Covenant without the necessary authority, preparation and disposition. But again, are we misinterpreting something? If these were in all truth acts of divine justice, can we reconcile such seemingly unbecoming behavior on God's part with the possibility that these individuals didn't die in pain but rather in

pleasure, that the fire which consumed them was that of God's love? By not permanently rejecting God, yet having committed acts which demanded their being called home by way of an ecstasy of supernatural fire, perhaps Nadab and Abihu were preserved from a final, permanent and future rejection of God.

"It's interesting to consider this possibility. But who can say why God does certain things? Even the angels don't have all the answers.

"Anyhow, let's return to the experience of God's love. And here I recommend a word of discretion. Whenever you experience God's embrace, no matter how delightful it may be, don't fall into the habit of seeking it for the pleasure alone, whether it's felt spiritually or physically.

"To desire God's love only for the pleasure is spiritual gluttony. It's basically a selfish indulgence, because it's not Divine Love you desire but rather the satisfaction of the embrace. Always remember this.

"Let the pleasure come to you, but allow it to fly away when it wishes to. Don't expect it—and don't demand it. And remember that God's consolation is an unearned gift. It may not always be the case, but this gift is probably given more often to those who give themselves to God *finally* and *totally*.

"But more than the pleasure of spiritual lovemaking, we should develop an acquired taste for the substance of God. It's the desire to possess the Divine Essence and to be possessed by it. Regardless of pleasure.

"The soul is embraced by God at every moment. But it seems to me that for most people, the embrace isn't an actual experience, at least not a conscious one. When you can smile with great delight—even in the absence of physical or spiritual satisfaction—knowing that the substance of God is essentially united to yours, holding you continuously, you've arrived.

"While we live, this love must be nurtured so that it can grow stronger. It may go on to develop forever in Heaven. But

at some point it reaches critical mass. A threshold is crossed and the love for God impels one to use logical impossibilities.

"This kind of love speaks to God and says, 'Even if I ceased to exist, I would continue forever in You, my true and eternal Self. If you go on, I go on, too. I wouldn't exist *and yet* I would exist. My beloved God, you're the eternal me'. It's the kind of love that says, 'Oh my God, even if You could relinquish to me your infinite blessedness and your infinite happiness—even your infinite nature itself—I'd accept none of it because I want *you* to have it all. Even if I could possess exclusively the infinite bliss of your divine nature, I'd never take it for myself. I would rather return to non-existence.'

"Ablaze with love, the soul says to God, 'Even if I could somehow become a Fourth Person of the Most Holy Trinity—infinite in nature—even so I would still worship *You*. Because I dearly love you with all of *our* heart and all of *our* spirit. Not all of *my* heart. Not all of *my* spirit. We are now one.'

"This species of love identifies the other, especially the divine Other, with one's self. At the very least, it considers God to be the completion of one's very self. This love transcends all worship because it desires to become God even in essence—although this is impossible—only so that it can love God with *the infinite intensity* with which God loves. It doesn't want to be worshiped in return, but to lavish on God a love and worship unlimited in magnitude.

"It wants to lavish superinfinite delight on God, a bliss so good that even God could never imagine it. Of course this is impossible, but it might be possible to please God beyond measure just by the mere desire to do so. As finite and created beings, it's possible that the only infinity inherent to our nature is the *desire* contained in our love. We're capable of an infinite hunger. Hopefully God is the object of that appetite.

"Anyhow, do you know what else pleases God beyond measure? It's the realization that even in your estrangement

from God you were never alone. The Almighty was with you. Around you and in you. Within and without. Almighty Bliss was delighting in you, even in all your desolate wanderings.

"And so it dawns on you that on a much higher level—in a mystical way—the two of you were always making spiritual love. God and soul are essentially united in a oneness infinitely stronger than what's found in any earthly marriage. Realizing this, the joy is almost too much. It's as if the two of you—no, *the one of you*—have been in love from the beginning."

Pausing his monologue for a moment, Camillus looked at Adam with compassion. "You know, you should really try to approach God in a romantic way. Up until now, your love for your Creator has been nebulous, lacking the spiritual eros you so desperately need. If you decide to pursue this and set out on a new path, you might begin with the late Trappist monk, Father Thomas Merton. He had a thing or two to say about the relationship between God and the soul. There are recordings of the lectures he gave to the novices at his monastery. I think that these talks can guide the seeker looking to progress on the spiritual way to divine union. Maybe that can be you."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Adam leaned back in his chair and looked up at the ceiling. He knew the calling of his heart, and it certainly wasn't marriage. At least it wasn't marriage of the earthly sort. The intimacy for which he was meant could only be enjoyed with God. But he hadn't given himself totally and forever to the One for whom he had been fashioned. It was commitment, not mere vocational awareness, that he so desperately needed.

"Father, what you're saying makes sense. The capacity of the human heart is literally *nothing* relative to God's limitless immensity. It almost frightens one to consider God's ability to make spiritual love to the soul. To have a lover and a soulmate who can utilize omnipotence in an infinitude of ways to satisfy your whole being...it's a breathtaking, humbling thought.

"I want to *want* this divine Love who just so happens to be my Maker—my one and only Love Maker. I want to *hunger* for God. I want to let go of mere intellectual devotion for a love based in spirit and truth.

"I do realize that my knowledge of eternal life has been academic. Yes, it's an eternal exchange of love with God that begins in this life. It's to know that God is your final fantasy, whose infinitely perfect essence is one with yours in a bond that holds you in being, and that the fantasy will never end. But here in this life, even the most sublime experience of God is just spiritual foreplay. The real magic takes place in the world to come. One in which, clothed with omnipotence, we'll live the unlimited life of God. This returns me to your revelation, Father.

"I'd like to know about how God and the deified saints will cooperate in the making of universes. Based on what you saw—or rather on what you *didn't* see—we don't know how it'll be done. Although, as you said earlier, it may take two different

forms. But when it comes to the deified couple, how should we envision the process from beginning to end?

"In individual co-creation, God will bring into being a universe in the deified person, obviously by utilizing some contribution on his or her part. But in acts of creation that involve the deified man and woman, will God bring those acts to fruition through celestial procreation? I'd *really* like to know what you think about individual co-creation."

Camillus was hard at thought, the contemporary image of Rodin's *The Thinker*. "If I had to hazard a guess, the deified couple, working with God, will utilize not only their bodies, but their minds and souls as well. Do you remember what I said about the human reproductive elements in the glorified body? They may be preserved. But if not, then deified human beings won't engage in procreation as we define it. Still, they might possess a supernatural ability *akin* to natural procreation.

"Coming together in cosmic co-creation, the deified man and woman—and their God—will produce truly unique realities. *Universes*. Perhaps entirely spiritual realms will be brought into being. This will be cause for great celebration in the heavenly spheres. Because this will go on forever.

"Perhaps co-creation will be a supernatural *equivalent* of procreation. God will surely be involved in the process, but will utilize something from the deified couple, scaling it up to produce something very much like our universe. But the fruit of this act won't be one or more children. It'll be a spatiotemporal reality into which unnumbered creatures will be born.

"We could speculate that the man and woman, before making love in glory, will finalize the design of their universe so that each of them contributes something to the grand design. Alternately, they would produce the cosmic blueprints in their minds, but only after God brings forth a universe in a formless state...something that could be shaped and formed according

to the designs of the architects. In either case, God would take the deified couple's blueprints and go to work from there."

Adam was lost in wonder as Camillus went on. "Our Creator's obvious intent was to include us in the plan of creation. We were created by God to be literal co-creators, specifically procreators, as sexual beings. Thus, humanity has multiplied since the beginning. Marriage, together with the procreative act and the blessing of offspring, are a foreshadowing of what our Creator has in mind for us. We find the truth of our eternal destiny in the truth of what we are *now*. The truth points to itself.

"A supreme fruitfulness, which will be ours in glory, is prefigured here and now in the fruitfulness of conjugal love. God is love, and love is an exchange, and an exchange of love requires more than one person in the equation. Thus, God is a divine community of Persons, so close to each other that they aren't three supreme beings but one. And this triune Supreme Being created our universe, the fruit of divine love.

"We were made to be participants in the divine plan, which exhorts us to be fruitful and multiply. It's truly a foretaste of what we're meant to be eternally: deified gods. In the Psalms, God calls us gods—even *now*. '*Ye are gods*'. But if we're gods even in this life, will we not be *deified* gods in the one to come?

"Our human procreative abilities will be remade into the transcendent tools we'll use to participate in acts such as what God alone did at the moment of Creation. This is the story of the deified couple and God the Trinity—five persons in all. Each of the five contributes something to the co-creative act.

"You know...there was once a great teacher in Japan by the name of Morihei Ueshiba who taught what's known today as 'the Art of Peace'. A book was written with that title in which Morihei's talks, poems and calligraphy were collected. One of the translations of the work is by John Stevens, and it contains a passage that's relevant here.

"On page one-hundred and twenty-two of his book, we read about how every person *is a universe in miniature*. Thus, even in our current form of human nature, we exist as co-creators of universes—albeit of the organic, biological kind—by way of procreation. The cells that constitute our bodies are worlds. Our tissues and organs are galaxies. And the cosmic inhabitants? The microorganisms within us. In my opinion, most folks would see this as mere metaphor.

"But is it metaphysical law that things in a universe—things like our bodies—can't exist as universes in themselves? Is it wrong to conceive of the human body as a universe of biological elements? One universe can be part of another. And any *kind* of universe can be part of another.

"The body is a procreated universe—alive, aware, able to think and able to love. Every mother pregnant with child is a universe of carbon-based matter and energy, and she holds within her another such universe. And both of them are parts of an immensely larger universe of planets, stars and galaxies. Ours is a fractalized reality.

"The point is that, even in the felicity of Heaven, co-creation won't be a *new* reality, but something enhanced. Extended. *Scaled up*. But we shouldn't elevate ourselves from co-creators to outright creators, claiming that God is unnecessary to our existence or propagation as a species. Because sometimes we can interpret scientific discoveries in a way that seems to make God's existence unnecessary to explain our existence. In a recent development, photons were transformed from energy into matter.

"When we look at Einstein's equation, $E=mc^2$, we're not surprised that someone found a way to 'phase-shift' energy into matter. The equation tells us that energy and matter are interchangeable. But it seems the implication is that science has realized the creation of physical matter. And if science can do this, *why God*?

"In no way is this creation in a literal sense because the resultant matter wasn't brought into existence from a state of non-existence. It was only a change in manifestation. Energy, which is non-physical in nature—or at least partly so—was merely 'crystallized' into a physical mode of being.

"However, we can categorize this transformation as a lower form of co-creation because a cosmic element was changed from one form to another. It's like art in general and sculpture specifically. Just as the sculptor changes a physical mass from one form to another, we're able to effect a change in the visible world's *mode* of existence.

"Just like art, human procreation is a form of *natural* co-creation, although more exalted than art. However, the deified couple, as participants in God's omnipotence, will take part in acts of *supernatural* co-creation. Five persons in all, three of whom are unlimited in nature, will contribute in very significant ways.

"However, this doesn't imply that each of the five will play an equal part. You might say that although the human architects decide, God provides. We decide on the design, and God provides the building material. But by themselves and without the input of God, mere creatures aren't able to create anything *ex nihilo*—out of nothing. Even in the deified state they can't possess omnipotence as an inherent quality due to their finite natures. However, although omnipotence can't originate in them, it can be *channeled* through them.

"In the act of co-creation the divinized couple will be oned with God who brings into being the necessary matter and energy. Then in some fashion they'll proceed to give form, movement and order to a newly begotten universe. Instead of procreating a single child, they'll produce a new cosmos of living things. Regarding procreation, the matter necessary for conception, which is contributed by the father and mother in the *act* of procreation, existed in some form at

the moment of Creation. Just so, in every act of co-creation, God will make, and thus provide, the 'building material'.

"But by what *process* will co-creation be realized? It may just depend on how we envision it. As the Lord tells us in the Gospel, '*Ask, and it will be given to you*'.

"If we want it to be so, co-creation can happen through a supernatural process that mirrors procreation in a way. But unlike procreation, this celestial act wouldn't *directly* produce any number of children but rather a living, intelligent and self-aware universe, made possible by the omnipotence of God. It all begins with the deified couple, existing as a single idea in their minds—minds with vast intellect, creativity and memory capacity, superior even to those of history's intellectual giants. Think Isaac Newton. Srinivasa Ramanujan. Bobby Fischer.

"Let's say that the man and woman desire beforehand to participate in the creation of a universe—about which they'd converse and agree, the same as they'd do in planning for a child. Each has a unique contribution, but there are common elements such as the natural laws determining the creation's unique character and quality. After considering its nature and form, including the characteristics and properties of its life, a final design is reached.

"Of one mind, the couple *knows* everything they've agreed on. Perfectly, completely and unforgettably. Thus, it follows that design disagreements and misunderstandings are in no way possible. The man and the woman possess in their deified minds a single, complete and agreed-upon mental model of the universe they wish to co-create.

"This conceptual model abides within the two minds simultaneously. It literally exists in two places at once. And it constitutes the blueprints of the universe to be created.

"God, however, takes the model and translates it, via an act of omnipotence, from an abstract mental entity into two objects—real and actual *things*—each representing half of the

deified couple's mental model. One object contains the design information—the 'cosmic DNA'—necessary to produce what the man contributed by way of his imagination. And the other object contains the design information necessary to produce what the woman contributed.

"We might use the term '*semicosm*' to refer to each of the two objects, inherent to which are the natural laws agreed upon by the deified couple. The semicosms are infinitesimal in size. But each possesses two natures: material and spiritual. And they are immortal. Indestructible. Nothing in Creation has the power to destroy them. God alone possesses that ability. But God would never exercise such power. Therefore, the two semicosms are everlasting, subject to no degradation.

"The divinized man receives from God his semicosm, which materializes in his heart. In the same way, the woman receives her semicosm as it materializes within *her* heart. And since God and all of Heaven forever dwell within both hearts, the two semicosms are submerged in an infinite ocean of love and are thus blessed by love-waters of the most radiant light.

"Now in the coming together of the man and woman, it could be that long ages pass before the consummation of their supernal act of love. And that's because time constraints don't exist in Heaven. There's no rush to get things done.

"But eventually, the glorified couple embrace. But they go beyond any natural embrace, even that of the conjugal act. Their resplendent bodies *interpenetrate*, mutually permeating one another. Stepping into each other, mind interpenetrates mind and heart interpenetrates heart. In this manner the two semicosms within their hearts are joined into *one*.

This event leads to the formation of a *protouniverse*, a cosmos in its early, primitive stage of development. One might think of it as a microscopic sphere of matter, energy, light and spiritual essence, many times more radiant than our universe. The protouniverse, infinitesimal like the semicosms, remains in

a motionless state until acted upon by the Prime Mover, who is God, the Creator of all.

"But the protouniverse does take time to form. Early in its development, the woman locks it away in her heart, so that when she disunites bodily with the man it remains within her. Here it reaches the final phase of its formation. Thus, an entire universe is created within the heart of the woman. And so she becomes the *creatrix* and mother of all the life in her cosmos.

"But before the process of creation can be completed, the protouniverse must be set in motion by the Prime Mover. Held in suspended animation, it has yet to receive from God the impetus that would give it life. That 'spark' that would turn it into a universe properly so-called, exploding outward with staggering rapidity and perpetual change.

"However, while it remains in the heart of the creatrix, it can neither expand outward nor undergo any kind of change. It can't produce cosmic events as universes naturally do. This is because a dormancy is imposed upon the protouniverse.

"This constraint is necessary so that it doesn't expand in the woman's heart. Because if that were to happen, the nascent universe would be stopped almost immediately by the equally indestructible body of the woman. And the net effect would be that the protouniverse would be unable to expand outward, thus rendering it unfit for all but perhaps the most infinitesimal forms of life. Its growth and evolution would come to a standstill.

"On the other hand...maybe it *can* expand outward from within the heart of the woman without ill effect. This is because her deified body—and the protouniverse itself—are composed of spiritualized matter. And a body of spiritualized matter can pass through—and be passed through by—substances of a physical nature. After all, the truth has been related to us that Christ in his resurrected body was able to pass through walls.

"Anyhow, when the time for the woman has arrived and she knows that the universe is ready to be born, God reaches

out and touches it. Thereby it's set in motion, radiant with quasi-divine celestial light. All the intelligent races that emerge within it, both human and otherwise, can rightly be called the children of the deified man and woman. Nevertheless, in a preeminent way they belong to God.

"The nature of the co-created cosmos is comparable to glorified human nature. In our natural, non-glorified state, body and soul are like two sides of the same coin. But in the glorified and deified saint, the two sides are reduced to one. And this is because, according to the basic message of Revelation, the very nature of reality will be changed. The words '*a new heaven and a new earth*' can be interpreted to mean that everything that exists in the post-eschatological future, which includes the universes co-created by deified humanity, will be fundamentally different than everything that came before.

"The universe in its present form will be one example of what 'came before', and it's completely physical in nature. If there's a spiritual aspect to it, it's not visually apparent and is therefore in some way separated from the physical aspect. On the contrary, the realities we'll co-create with God will be such that the physical and the spiritual will be one. Gone will be the sad dichotomy of matter and spirit that characterizes the current reality, wherein one aspect remains invisible to—but also separated from—the other. Spirit and matter will be replaced with 'spirit-matter', and all things will be visible to all things. We'll see a unity and harmony such as we can hardly imagine now.

"It follows that the glorified man and woman, together with God, will create something intrinsically different than the reality we now inhabit. Thus the nature of the protouniverse, which God ignites by the spark of animation, will be akin to the nature of the risen body, which is physical *and* spiritual. The difference is that the nascent universe, although composed of spiritualized matter, isn't yet a glorified or deified thing.

"This follows from the truth that a spiritual substance isn't a thing of glory merely by virtue of its spiritual nature. The lost human soul and the evil spirit are cases in point. Thus a co-created universe of 'spirit-matter' doesn't originally exist in a glorified, deified state. But whatever may be the nature of the new cosmos, five persons participate in the creation: the three Divine Persons and the deified couple in their glory. And so the number 'five' is sacred and holy. Adam, hold up your hand."

"Huh?"

"Just do it. Hold it up." Adam obliged, shaking his head.

"The hand has five digits, does it not? It's a symbol of the collaboration that takes place in every act of co-creation *and* in every act of natural human procreation. Every person is a 'ground of consciousness' set apart from all other individuals. This is why the thumb is set apart from the other fingers, which represent the Three Persons of God and the individual's significant other.

"The five digits are joined together in the hand. Did God arbitrarily decide on that number? No. The hand—especially in the fist—is a real sign of the power of those five persons working together, before and after theosis. And so isn't it telling that in my vision I held in each hand a spiritual hologram of a universe?

"But you know what? The number 'three' is also sacred and holy. Not only because it's the number of the Trinity, but also because it's the number of a trinity of another sort, the one formed by the union of the divinized couple and the One God. Yes, God is in essence a trinity of divine Persons. And yet God is also a single being who is completely and perfectly made manifest by each of the three Persons. God is three and God is one. Three and one. Therefore, the one and true God, together with the glorified man and the glorified woman, form a trinity of their own."

CHAPTER EIGHT

In deafening silence, Adam walked over to the kitchen window, peering through the sunlit pane with a squint. After a moment of thought, he snapped back to reality. “A deified couple and their God. Two creatures and their Creator. The finite and the Infinite. The temporal and the Eternal. Imagine a multitude of souls who've been raised into Godhood and joined to God to form something beyond what the human and the divine are individually. We might call it '*The Everything*', as it consists, on the one hand, of innumerable creatures in their deified state, and on the other the limitless Divine Essence.

“On some level this constitutes an entirely new being. Yes, there's still an infinite Creator, and there are still individual creatures, but all of them collectively constitute the essence of this Everything. In the formation of this transcendent reality, God's being retains every divine perfection, while at the very same time it assimilates myriad creatures in their deified state along with the sundry perfections of their finite natures.

“In order for a vast throng to be *one spirit* with God there must be a unity of being on some level, made possible by a common *will*. There's the being of creatures, the being of God and the being of both combined. But this is an entity in which the identity of God and the identity of each creature are retained. Created nature and the divine nature join into a synthesis of metanature, brought about by the combined *will* of God and Creation to form a transcendent Being by their unity—a metaphysical unity, yet unlike the Hypostatic Union.

“The Hypostatic Union is the union *of natures*—two natures—within a single Divine Person and belongs solely to *that* person. But the union of The Everything doesn't belong exclusively to any one person within it. Rather than a union of natures, it's a union *of persons* into one superinfinite Being.

"Mystically, each deified creature within The Everything possesses both selfhood and *otherhood* simultaneously. The otherhood refers to all the 'others' in The Everything. What I'm talking about here is a Supreme Being universal in its nature.

"God is at the heart of this Unity. But the essence of this transcendent, superinfinite Being is the *common desire*, shared by myriad creatures, to be *one in spirit and truth.* Their desire is what makes them one in being—though they differ in nature and substance—because it's the common desire which forms the essence of that being. The *will* to be one is the very substance of this Being, just as the will of the adopting parents and that of an orphan make the three of them one family.

"We can also think of it in terms of part and whole. The substance of God is absolutely simple in its nature and so it's *partless*. It possesses no constituent elements or components. But all creatures, on the other hand, are composed of parts. Even the embodied soul, or any created spirit for that matter, isn't the absolute simplicity of the Spirit of God.

"Therefore, when myriad creatures become *one spirit* with God, we can propose that the result is the formation of a Being that possesses a partless aspect, which is God's simple essence, and a composite aspect consisting of creatures who are themselves compound in nature. What a paradox this is, to be at once partless *and* composite! This is about the union of two worlds—God's world and that of Creation. A new Heaven and a new Earth, one might say."

Even as he spoke, Adam realized that in a sense this was something bigger than God alone. "Father, besides being a fitting symbol of the union of Man, Woman and the Trinity—especially in co-creation—the five fingers might be used to symbolize the Everything. A digit for one's glorified self, three for the Trinity and the fifth for each and every glorified person within The Everything. As you pointed out, the five fingers are

joined in the hand and are thus united, most visibly in the fist. In and through the union of The Everything, God in a sense becomes greater, possessing now the quality of finitude while retaining the infinite qualities of the divine nature. God already possesses finitude in the Hypostatic Union of Christ but now acquires the finitude of each perfected creature in Heaven.

"You said that the number 'three' symbolizes the union of God and the deified human couple. Could this number also symbolize the relationship between each individual person and two others: the 'other' of all creatures beside one's self and the 'other' of God? God, one's self and all created beings other than one's self—the three categories of reality. *Totality*.

"The way I see it, in the life which is to come, when all's been said and done, each person will enjoy a threefold union of being with God and the next deified person, but also a threefold union of being with God and the next deified person after that, and so on. John Doe, Jane Doe and God—three in number but also one in number, each enjoying a unique trifold relationship that never ends. The same holds true for *every* inhabitant of Heaven. Every deified person will have a very special and unique relationship with each of the vast number of other such persons, while God serves as the bond between them. And so innumerable trinities will exist, each of them like a little mirror of the one Trinity.

"Now let's think about what The Everything implies. On a mystical level we'll *be* one another. We'll be ourselves, but also each other. In other words, each glorified person, in being God mystically, is what all the others have become mystically, which again is God. We become One. We remain creatures, but we also mystically become the One God through divine adoption. And although we consider God to be 'other' than ourselves, we become this divine Other. Therefore, each of us is both 'self' and 'other' at the very same time. *Self and other*. One's divinized self, all divinized 'others', and God—the three

aspects of The Everything are one. The One who is many, and the many who are One.

"Using a body of water as a metaphor, The Everything is one Body—a Body made up of innumerable glorified bodies. Each body is joined with a glorified soul, with each soul being oned mystically with all others and with God, with Christ as the head of this great Body. Thus, Christ is the mind that moves the Body and every one of its innumerable parts, which are the glorified saints. But because Christ is God, and because God has a single mind and a single will—although these divine qualities are manifested in each of the three Divine Persons—we know that it's not merely Christ who moves this supernal Body, but rather the whole of the Trinity in truth.

"But the great mystery of this Body is that the whole is the part and the part is the whole. Each part moves the whole just as much as the whole moves the parts. If each deified person is one spirit with God, and if God moves the parts, then each deified person moves all the others and thus the whole of the Body. An untold many move as one. Logic and reason fail us here, as they do when we ponder the most sublime truths."

CHAPTER NINE

Adam breathed deeply and sighed. He thought of the people of the world and the heavenly life to which they're called. After all, even if they can exist as our 'other selves' only in Heaven, shouldn't we want them to be happy in this present but fleeting life? Shouldn't we care about them, even if it's impossible by nature to have any affection for them now? Adam cared, even to the point of love.

"I've never told anyone about this, but for a long time now I've had a secret desire, a yearning almost too deep for words. I like to call it 'the Dream'. It's about the salvation of everyone in the world. Not only those living in the world now, but every soul who ever lived or will live on this earth during my lifetime. Scripture basically says that a great many souls will reject God—and thus Salvation—but the Dream doesn't encompass the entirety of humanity. Therefore, it contradicts Revelation in no way. Hell can exist, and everyone who will ever live in the world during my lifetime can be saved forever. The two realities aren't mutually exclusive. They can exist as simultaneous truths.

"Some say that Hell doesn't exist, or that it doesn't last forever. But this can't be true because death isn't some magic switch that's flipped, making everything good in your mind and heart. Unless it's purged, baggage still adheres to the soul—anxieties, vices, fixations, guilt and regret. Since death doesn't destroy the soul, it doesn't extinguish these things either. We all know that life can be a self-made hell on Earth. But some believe that the passing of the physical body is like a *deus ex machina* in which spiritual maladies are instantly eradicated.

"Anger, bitterness and resentment are deeply rooted in some people, growing in time into a burning hatred. Some go

on to do very evil things in life without atoning for those wrongs before they die. Does the dissolution of the body destroy one's ability to harbor spiritual evils such as anger or hatred? Don't these vices remain in the soul, even if there's no body to express them? The body allows for emotional expression, but emotion is just that—the expression of a deeper reality.

"The corresponding vice behind any negative emotion remains so long as purgative work isn't exerted. A negative emotion isn't the vice that enables that emotion. An evil reality, namely vice, lies behind the negative emotions and is more fundamental than the expression of such emotions apparent in a person's demeanor.

"It might be that most souls don't reject God forever, but I dare say that history has seen its fair share of those who do. The soul *is* able to make a final, permanent decision. It's also capable of making temporary decisions. In both cases the decision requires the ability to choose between two polar opposites: a positive vibration one might say, and a negative one. One can choose to adopt the positive vibration or the negative on both a temporary basis and a permanent basis. Temporary *and* permanent: it's both. But eventually we all make a final decision, because it needs to be made—and it's real. And it's forever.

"Since the beginning of Creation, intelligent creatures have permanently rejected God. And some are on the cusp of doing just that. We should pray for the latter, that they receive extraordinary grace. That they turn away from self-destruction. But our collective efforts, together with divine grace, are like carrots thrown into water to get a horse to drink. In the end, *they* have to effect a change in themselves. But God's ability to seduce is without limit. Creatures with intelligence, conscience and free will can be drawn back to the light.

"If it's true that we're meant to have special and unique relationships with each other in Heaven, and if we're going to

create entire universes with God in some fashion, then if only a single soul is lost we lose an entire reality—a loss of infinite weight. A cosmic co-creator gone forever. Lost to an endless darkness from which no escape is possible. This is what the Dream is all about—doing what's in our power in the work of salvation. I believe it's the noblest work the soldier of God can undertake.

"And if we persevere in our efforts and remain focused on what we're trying to accomplish—on what God's trying to do—we can maintain our morale. Because we're fighting a war for souls, including our own. And even if, God forbid, some are lost in the end, the war is ours. The victory belongs to God's army. Heaven awaits the Faithful. Aside from superabundant love and peace, perhaps unparalleled freedom will be one of the defining characteristics of the glorified life. And so what a tragic loss the ruined soul is.

"Imagine the lost potential of such a pitiful soul. Its eternal separation from God is one of two parallel states of existence. The other is an eternal life of unbelievable felicity. At some point the path forked and the soul chose an unhappy existence. I believe that each person must have a truly unique experience before he or she can possess the clarity necessary to make that final, everlasting decision. It's different for each individual, but only God can bring about the experience.

"Still, God wants us to be partners in the divine plan of salvation, delaying most if not all salvific acts until we do our part in this most vital work. And I believe that our part consists of prayer, works of charity and offerings of personal suffering for the spiritual benefit of others. These acts of love move the heart of God, and that's what God desires. God *wants* to be moved. It's true that God can save souls without our input. But where's the participation in that? Where's the teamwork? God and the believer are a team, just as husband and wife are a team. We all have a part to play in the great cosmic war for souls.

"The spiritual warrior fights unrelentingly and to the very end. And we're the weapons that God uses to conquer hearts and minds. The warrior *and* the sword. The grace of God makes us both.

"I believe that I've been given a mission, and it won't be accomplished until every soul in the world is saved. I won't lay down my sword until it's done. This isn't to say that my efforts are the direct cause of anyone's salvation. They're only a small part of a massive, collective effort to move God to perform one of the greatest miracles of all—the Dream.

"Imagine becoming so intimate with God that any good thing that you ask for would be granted. A king in love with his queen would give her anything she desires. Similarly, the soul that's on sufficiently intimate terms with its Heavenly Spouse would never be denied anything it wants. Anything good, that is. And so we aim for a radical intimacy with God, so that when we work and pray for the salvation of the world, it'll be granted. As disciples of the Lord this should be our greatest concern.

"It's about working for the salvation of all, and therefore the deification of all. You know, when the voyage of my life is over, I'll finally set foot on the Shores of Eternity. And before the throne of God, and like Eärendil in *The Silmarillion*, maybe by fiery intercession I can move Heaven to act, and in that sense 'save the world'.

"It just seems that for most people, the salvation of the world isn't so important a matter. If you ask me, that shouldn't be how it is. Things might be different if we lived in a state of existence in which each of us knew *everyone* personally, even in the absence of personal acquaintance. Such a supernatural condition would call for a mental and spiritual unity that we can hardly imagine. More than anything it would require love.

"But what would it be like? The experiences, thoughts, emotions, dreams and fantasies of each person would belong to all. Thereby, we'd be greatly concerned for each other and

our eternal welfare. Given that in such a spiritually connected existence every individual would have to love every other by prerequisite, there would exist in each of us a universal desire for the divinization of the entire race.

"But this isn't our current reality—probably the result of the Fall. And this makes it possible for loners like me to exist. Perhaps human nature in the beginning possessed this unity but was lost in the Garden. But if all things are possible with God, then it's possible to foretaste this reality *even now*—even for those of us with little psychic talent. I believe that telepaths exist, yet they have to be relatively rare. But to read and know the minds of others—their feelings, dreams and fantasies—isn't the unity I'm speaking of. Even if individuals exist with the most exotic of mental abilities, we're far from the oneness I'm searching for. It's a total, complete and universal unity, not the ability of a subset of humankind to know the thoughts of one or a few individuals at a time.

"Sometimes I think that God allowed us to experience this existential separateness we call 'personhood' so that we'd know just how desolate it can actually be. To experience the disconnect, the barrenness of a separate existence. We have more than our share of loneliness, even in our most intimate relationships. And this loneliness, in turn, is meant to make us yearn for that unity that only Heaven is. As the saying goes, '*Absence makes the heart fonder*'.

"In being deprived of that supernatural unity, we grow fonder of it. Well, I believe that's the way it's supposed to work. But because I know the lot of the human being, which is to live as a separate person with an independent consciousness in a world that seeks only to divide and to be divided, I want to do what I can to move us beyond even our original unity.

"In Native American tradition there's a sacred ceremony known as the Sun Dance. It's a communal event in which acts of personal sacrifice are offered for the spiritual benefit of the whole

community. If we ponder and reflect on the essence of it, it's basically about love. Love is what impels the participants to offer sacrifices for those in the community, and it seems to me that these Native peoples were walking the right path in their spiritual evolution. One can sense vibes of truth in this, and it's a tragedy that the practice was suppressed by those who didn't consider—or rejected the idea—that these ancient ways could have been incorporated somehow into the Christianity they were trying so desperately to sell the natives on. How can the offering of prayers and sacrifices for others be contrary to Christ or the Church? How can acts of love be wrong?

"I see the Dream as the Sun Dance of my personal spiritual life. Each time that I make sacrificial offerings to God for the salvation of the world, I believe that I'm walking a mystical path that runs parallel to the Sun Dance, which according to the best of my understanding is off-limits to non-Native persons. You might say that I'm a successor of this reality albeit outside the official tradition. I truly want to benefit *my* community—all of humanity—in the same spirit.

"And since the Dream is my personal Sun Dance, bad things have happened to me. And they'll keep happening to me. The past ten years have been especially brutal.

"But just like the native Sun Dancer, my aim is to be a spiritual warrior, by God's good grace. In my opinion, the highest act of the spiritual warrior is allowing oneself to be like a lightning rod. Spiritually speaking, you take the hit for others so that they can live relatively free from evil.

"But it's also important to guard against doubt. I refuse to let doubt win out against the Dream. Sometimes there's a voice inside that says, '*Not all of them will be saved*', but I don't listen to it. God's promise is that for the one who truly believes, external reality will reflect that belief. Because faith is *power*.

"Still, doubt in the Dream can't be avoided. Many aren't going to believe in it. Even if it's because they know that evil

people exist in the world, and that many of these individuals apparently die without conversion.

"But what can the doubters possibly know about what a sinner experiences right before the moment of death? Have they considered that in the moment before death, Christ can appear to the individual for the duration of an instant, as if that moment were a thousand years? And in this flash of time a radical conversion can take place. '*With the Lord a day is like a thousand* years', as it's written. And so if a day is like a thousand years with God, a moment can be like a lifetime.

"Even for individuals who appear to die in the absence of saving grace, the impossible is possible with God, who can work miracles in a quantum of time. And so appearances are just that. A log in the water appears bent. Similarly, the dying sinner could merely appear to be lost in the moment before death, as the waters of grace effect a total change of heart.

"Simply put, the Dream is all about rousing oneself to constant, unflagging prayer and self-sacrifice in the doubtless belief that God's grace will come down and do the heavy lifting in this work of salvation. It's about the spiritual warrior moving God's heart to saving action, and it's about becoming God's weapon towards this end. Jesus said that if we ask *anything* in His name he will do it. Let's ask that the Dream come true.

"But even while we hold to this faith, I believe that we should pray particularly for the greatest sinners in the world. I think that these souls are capable of the greatest holiness. Because the state of vileness and the state of holiness are like the swings of a pendulum. The further it swings to the left, the further to the right it's able to go.

"Thus, the greater the sinner, the higher will be his or her state of heavenly glory—provided that a conversion takes place before death. And provided that sanctifying grace is present in the final moment. We can think of it like this: in true conversion, the energy expended in a life of sin

and evil is now converted and at the same time redirected into good living.

"Look at how the Prodigal Son was welcomed home by his father. He received such favorable treatment that his older brother furiously confronted his father, to whom he'd remained faithful from the start. It's like that with God and us.

"But if you're a great sinner and think that you can get away with a life of dissipation—of forbidden pleasures and foul deeds and ungodly behavior—and then abandon the way of darkness at the last minute and be saved, then you take a colossal risk. One of eternal import. How can you know that you'll turn in time to be saved? Who would dare risk that?

"There's no guarantee here. Who can afford to play with fire like this? We should seek to be as good as possible, rather than sinful or evil, and let our rank in Heaven fall where it may. Everyone there will be perfectly happy, and so in a way, one's place in the celestial hierarchy won't matter. The bottom line is that there's hope even for the most sinful and evil people in the world, and we should intercede for them before the throne of God Almighty, that they might experience what our brothers and sisters in the Orthodox Church call *metanoia*, or 'change of heart'. And Father, we know that your monastic counterparts in the Orthodox Church are also in this fight. The monks of Athos!

"In our work for the salvation of the world, we include in our prayers even the sinister. We have a duty—an obligation—to intercede for even the vilest individuals on this planet. We must look to their conversion and salvation. Their *deification*. The Dream depends on it.

"The most wicked human beings are just that—human beings. They were at one time little children, blessed to enjoy the natural innocence of youth. Think about that for a second. Where are these children now? Have they all fallen into non-existence, replaced by what are now full-grown adults? Isn't one's childhood part of the sum total of one's existence?

"We'd do well to remember that we're temporal beings. We don't possess the fullness and entirety of our being in a single moment, or even in a period of time. Our lifespan, along with the substance of what we are, extends through time. The entirety of the physical essence of what we are, at least in this life, manifests over the time frame of each individual life.

"And so if the innocent child has grown into a wicked adult, and if the wicked adult dies in the light as a converted believer, which of the three is the real individual: the innocent child, the wicked sinner or the converted believer? On some level these three *aren't* the same person, and yet it's the same person in each case. So which one do we choose to call the real person? Would we deny forgiveness and salvation to the innocent child and to the converted believer because of the wicked sinner's present guilt?

"Mind you, forgiveness doesn't demand that we should be passive in our dealings with the powers of evil. Sometimes it's necessary to oppose them even physically. Because there is such a thing as a just war—a very rare thing. But regardless of whether the war is just or not, when it's over, will we have forgiveness in our hearts? *Will we*?

"But that's a battle all its own. To forgive those who've wronged us can be difficult, but often it's just as difficult to love a perfect stranger. To place in your heart somebody you don't even know, while your own family and friends already abide within it, is *hard*. To say the least. But for the one who believes in the Dream the future is now. The stranger, as a conceptual entity, is extinct. In the future life of Heaven, I dare say that everybody knows everybody. And so for the one who believes in the Dream, everyone is a family member because everyone has been saved. Since this reality is sure to come, it might as well begin now. For the Dreamer it *does* begin now.

"My point is this: why procrastinate? Let Heaven begin now. Draw the future into the present and make everyone in the

world your spiritual family in the *present* life. Because the spirit is greater than blood. Blood turns to dust when we die, just like the body. It follows that blood relations cease at death. But the *spirit* is forever. So being of one family in spirit is immeasurably greater than being of one family by blood. Place the Dream in your heart and make it happen! Deep inside, adopt everyone as your eternal family. Wanting it bad enough, you'll believe in it. And believing in it with unwavering faith, it'll actually *be*.

"Go deep within and see the face of every stranger as the face of a future loved one, as someone who'll bring you nothing but joy and love in the hereafter. Feel their future love for you. See their smiles and hear their laughter. Look into the eternal future and see the truth that they'll greatly love you in their heavenly happiness. See the truth that they're your future family. Your future family might as well be your family in the here and now! See, and open your heart to a new kind of love.

"Call to mind the strangers you've encountered. Even if you can't remember a single face, you've seen many people you don't know. Such are your future family. Say in your heart, 'All of them are going into the Kingdom of God. And if they're all going to Heaven, and if I go there also, then by necessity I'll have to love them at some point because nobody there is unloved. I might as well get a head start!'

"Think about your former classmates and schoolmates, even those you didn't really know. You might've heard a thing or two about some of them, but you never really knew them. Some were popular. Others were hated. But open your heart to the latter in a special way. Those who were introverted and shy. Those who remained distant and quiet. Place them in your heart and treasure their lives, knowing—by faith—that one day they'll blossom into some of the most beautiful saints.

"They went to the same school as you, attended the same classes. You didn't know them but you know their faces. They were a part of your school community because God arranged it so.

Go into the yearbooks. Look at the smiling faces. Those are the brothers and sisters you've never met, long lost in a way. There's a mystery here, in that they were part of a community, a school community to which you belonged, but without being part of your personal life.

"Are they as dead to us as the strangers buried at a cemetery? And speaking of cemeteries, when we go to visit one, chances are that we'll pass by the graves of strangers before we come to the headstones of our loved ones. The next time we go, maybe we can pause for a short time at a few strangers' graves before we visit our deceased family.

"Only for a moment. It doesn't mean that we love them more than those we loved in life. It's just that when we look down at the headstones of those we don't know, we have an opportunity to sincerely believe in our hearts that they've been saved and glorified, and *have* thus become imminently lovable, and therefore qualified to join the circle of people we call 'loved ones'? *We are all* capable of such faith!

"When the Lord commanded us to love our neighbor, did he mean the family next door? Or the ones that live down the street? Among the unnumbered people in this world who *aren't* friends or family, why would Christ command us to love only those who live nearby? It really makes no sense when we see his words in a literal light. It makes sense only if the word 'neighbor' serves as an allegory for the strangers of the world. Our worldview should be informed by two lines from Scripture: '*Love thy neighbor as thyself*', and, '*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?*' Family and friends love us.

"The world has little of Christ's love. And since it has so very little, it thrives in its apathy for the complete stranger. It's a dark world, but it doesn't have to be. We can change for the better as a species. But we're perfectly fine with this apathy.

"We should pause a moment and ask ourselves, 'Why are there so many people on Earth at the same time if we weren't

meant to love those we don't know?' Look at it this way: God arranged things so that our progenitors, Adam and Eve, would beget offspring, who would beget offspring in turn, and so on, long maintaining the original human bloodline. But eventually, changes in that bloodline would constitute sufficient evidence in the view of modern science—and probably most people—that there no longer exists one bloodline, but many. Assuming this to be true, why didn't God take the bloodlines and place them on different worlds, thereby separating them?

"If divergent bloodlines emerged from the original, why didn't God perform this work? A countless number of habitable planets either already existed or they could have been created by God for this purpose. God could've done this.

"I mean, if blood ranks above all else, does that mean that we should *exclusively* take care of our own? If those not of our blood deserve to go unloved, the bloodlines might as well be separated by entire planets. There would've been much less apathy and ill-treatment in that case. But that's not how things were done. That isn't how things are.

"I believe that we should learn how to love ourselves, as strangers to one another. And so here we are, stuck with each other until we learn. Regardless of whether there's one bloodline that contains in itself much variation and change, or many bloodlines, I think that we'd do well to break away from the mindset of 'my kind versus yours', 'my family versus yours' and 'my blood versus yours'. If we all have one origin, namely Adam and Eve, then we'd be right to change our thinking to reflect such a truth. Even if only on a spiritual level, we can become what some theorists call a 'breakaway civilization'.

"It begins with acts of love performed for the benefit of people in the world we don't know. But if our lives are such that opportunities to extend charity to strangers are hard to come by, we can express our love for them by praying for their salvation. We can place them in our minds and hearts, raise

our arms towards Heaven and offer up all of what we are to God for their sake. Even if it's just a quick and hasty prayer for the salvation of the world. I think we'd do well to make this a daily practice. Or at least an infrequent one.

"And in offering such prayer to God, we should note that we're not placing the stranger above loved ones. We're not loving the stranger more than our own family. Nobody's saying that we should go out into the world and spend more time with the stranger on the street than with our own family and friends. Because family *does* matter. And it *is* special.

"But there's a dichotomy in the way we treat our family and friends on the one hand, and the way we treat everyone else on the other, only if we haven't reached a certain point on our spiritual journey. But upon arriving there, *even if* we were to spend more time with what the world calls 'strangers', we wouldn't be spending any less time with loved ones. And that's because the 'strangers' would now be 'our own'.

"I believe that most people, including myself, have yet to reach that lofty height. And so, to an extent, we can't be blamed for loving family and friends more than anyone else. Still, loving family and friends above all others doesn't prevent us from loving the perfect stranger enough to pray to God every day that he or she be supremely happy in the next life and as happy as possible in this one. It's possible to do both at the same time!

"As commonly conceived in the human mind, whoever isn't a blood relation isn't family. Even the adopted child often receives less love from blood relations in the extended family. But such an attitude is a mental mirage. The truth is far richer. Truly, we're a race of intelligent and love-capable people who procreate. We're not made-to-order constructions built in total isolation. We come from those before us, and their blood is in us. And those who come after us have our blood in them.

"If the blood of Adam and Eve mingled in their children, and their children's blood did the same and so forth, then the

blood of the first man and that of the first woman was passed down from the very beginning and abides in everyone. There may be many bloodlines, but we all have a little of each line in us. This is because we all have something of the original line in us, and the original line contained within itself *all* the others.

"The *yang* within the *yin*, and the *yin* within the *yang*. Something of the stranger's blood is in me. And something of my blood is in the stranger.

"The shape changes, but not the form. Lao-Tzu knew that a physical thing can remain essentially what it is and yet change over time. Like wind and waves—like sand dunes—the human bloodline contains within itself much variation. And even if it's true that non-human DNA—or *other human* DNA—entered our race at some point in the past, then I imagine that it only dilutes our blood connection. It doesn't annihilate it.

"Here's the bottom line: if it's not possible to love those we don't know, then how is it possible to love God? Everyone seems to believe that you can't love someone you don't know. And this is exactly why strangers are often treated as less than family—even as second-class citizens. But if love requires that you familiarize yourself with someone's personality, then how is it possible to love God if you've never met God? How many of us have met God? And does God even have a personality?

"One might say that Christ, who is God incarnate, has a personality. But then how many of us have met Jesus in the sense of getting to know Him personally—talking to Him face-to-face over any significant amount of time? If the vast majority of human beings haven't done so, then how can we say that we love Him? We can't. Not if you have to familiarize yourself with someone's personality in order to love him or her.

"I think that few souls have literally met Christ during their natural lives. And *if* Christ has a personality, I think few have known it. In a mystical way we *can* know him, something which happens in the spirit. However, this mystical knowledge

isn't how human beings naturally know each other. However, if there's a mystical way for us to know and love Christ, then there has to be a mystical way for us to do the same with respect to one another. And there *is* such a way.

"The way is unity, and it begins even in this life. As I said earlier, in deification we merge into *one*, because we become God on a mystical level. And I'm not talking about the transubstantiation of creaturely essence into the Divine Essence, but the next best thing to that. In being one spirit with the Creator, each deified person is one spirit with all the deified. We become one spirit with each other because each of us becomes one spirit with *the* Spirit.

"But have we met these 'others' who've become one spirit with God? Those we call 'the saints'. The inhabitants of Heaven. We're talking about innumerable souls from all over the world and from myriad points in time. Do we know them personally? If not—and the answer is exceedingly like to be, 'No, we don't'—then it means that we must find it in our hearts to love them before we'd be able to know them.

"We'll have to learn how to love them, because how can we become one spirit with them if we don't love them? I believe that it's necessary to love the saints first in order to know them later in Heaven. I can't imagine that it's going to work the other way around. We live in a fallen world, and a lot of things are backwards.

"For some the transformation will happen in this life. For others it'll come after death. But it's necessary.

"The way I see it, for those who choose not to love the stranger in this life—whatever their reasons might be—the afterlife is a place where they'll be able to welcome this reality. An existence 'in the spirit' will provide the awareness by which they'll pass on from the world of exclusion in which they had chosen to live. Some souls are going to require a bit more time than others. 'Spiritual time', that is.

"But don't we have a name for this spiritual reality? Isn't it known as '*Purgatory*'? It's a place of purification, yes. But I venture to say it's also where one undergoes a soul change in which deep truths previously unknown or rejected are now wholly realized or embraced.

"Perhaps I can express it in terms that are more 'down to Earth'. When we experience the death of a loved one, our love for him or her continues on. But in doing so, our love is for a soul that has experienced *radical change*. To begin with, this person is now a wholly spiritual being. And if he or she still has a personality, it may not be the personality we knew in this life. I believe it can be completely changed by an encounter with God. Perfected, completed and eternalized. Thus, we're able to love someone we don't really know. Virtually, a stranger. And paradoxically, a loved one. It's possible to love a stranger, and of course it's possible to love a member of the family. But sometimes the two can be one and the same."

Camillus turned about and spoke with such conviction and authority that Adam was taken aback. "The world knows nothing about this love. Suffice it to say that the highest love *is its own knowledge*. Exterior information is unnecessary to the existence and free exercise thereof.

"The four kinds of love natural to human beings, on the other hand, are conditional. They do exist, but only when we acquire a minimum of information about the other to whom our love is directed. They require the prerequisite of knowledge.

"But the most exalted love isn't like that. Knowledge of the other is inherent to it. It carries within itself the knowledge of others and of God. It's a mystical knowledge of 'the other' and doesn't come from the discovery of others' personalities.

"If there existed in the world no real way to love an individual without the input of exterior knowledge, then from an individual standpoint, the whole *world* would remain unlovable.

The only ones you could ever hope to love, out of many billions of souls, would be those you know personally. And wouldn't this be a sorry state of affairs?

"It's no wonder that our world is so forlorn. I get the sense that relatively few—*relatively* few—have found this highest love which isn't based on preexisting knowledge. To me, it seems that most of us aren't looking for it. We're not searching for it. We aren't praying for it. Too often we stray from the path. There's this sense that too many die without this love. A very great tragedy."

On a sudden, Adam thought about the commandment to love one's neighbor. "You're right. Every person is precious and possesses infinite worth. Every person should be loved not only by family and friends, but by *everyone*. If God loves someone, then every love-capable creature should love that person. What God loves, we should love. And God loves every creature. So we should love everyone. No exceptions.

"I look at it this way: every human life is a miracle. Every person is a living miracle, because the odds against individual existence are infinite. Out of an infinite number of persons who God could've created, or out of an infinite number of souls that God could've embodied at conception, that particular soul was given existence.

"God breathed forth the Spirit of life. And a human soul was created, later to be born into the world. Out of an infinite number of 'others' who exist in a platonic universe within God's mind, a single individual was chosen and 'sent' into the world.

"The odds were an infinity to one against that person being given existence. But that's exactly what happened! It's most astonishing when you think about it. You and I shouldn't exist if you look at the statistical probabilities. Yet here we are.

"The human being is a radical creation. We *are* created versions of God, and God is love. We are created love: love in material form. The Divine Essence can't duplicate itself in

a temporal fashion. Even God can't *create* a divine duplicate, the nature of whom transcends all finite things in every way imaginable—and in every way unimaginable. And so God did the next best thing: the creation of the human being. We are God in created form; we are love in its finite, temporal, mortal and limited form; we exist as finite models of the Creator.

"The Creator had a thought and proclaimed, 'I'll make a created version of myself in the form of humankind. My being will be made manifest in every person on Earth. And for every young man, the young woman with whom he falls in love will be the highest representation of who and what I am. It'll be the same for the young lady who falls in love with a young man.'

"When you see someone's face, you're looking at the visible face of God. And so we have eight billion faces of God. Well, eight billion we know of! And since God's divine being is infinite, a perfect picture of the Eternal Beauty is impossible, even if each human person were perfect in every imaginable way. Still, we'll always be physical and spiritual expressions of the almighty God.

"In fact, each human body is also God's body. If God lives in us, and if God is united to us in an essential union that upholds our very existence, then how can our bodies belong exclusively to us? God and soul are like the pilot and copilot of an aircraft, so to speak. It's just that the copilot, who is the *real* pilot here, has chosen not to control the aircraft.

"But the copilot does own the plane. Therefore, when lovers kiss, they mystically kiss God, because their lips belong to bodies that belong above all to the Creator. In other words, in being essentially united to the body, God feels what *it* feels. Some might object to this idea, but If God wasn't linked up to bodily sense data, then God wouldn't know all things.

"Many people would probably say that although we've been made in God's image, we exist as individuals separate from God. But it's a mistake to say that God and the human being are

separate. Because if they're separate, how does God uphold the being and substance of the individual person?

"God and the creature aren't identical, but they're also not separate. The Creator's infinite essence isn't the essence of this or that person, or this or that creature. But the Creator inheres in everything in the created order, meaning that God is an essential part of every creature. And notice that I said that God is an essential *part*, and not the essential whole, of every creature. God is the 'partless part' of every created thing.

"If it's true that God and the creature aren't essentially identical, then how can God serve as an essential part of the creature? It's because God is the essence of the essence of the creature. The Creator is truly a part—but a *partless* part—of each created substance, which is composed of many parts. God is at the heart of compound entities. The crux, if you will. If the divine essence is absolutely simple in nature, then why can't God be the most fundamental element of the creature?

"In truth, the Divine Essence is the substratum of all created things. Stated in a different way, every created thing *is* an essence, yes. But every creature also *possesses* the Divine Essence as the ground of its being.

"We might say that the being of the human person is a function of two natures—one created, one uncreated. One is human, and the other is divine. This follows from the truth that nothing can exist apart from God. Nothing can exist outside of God, necessitating an essential union with Divinity.

"God is Existence in an absolute sense and is thus the source of every creature's being, the One who communicates existence to every creature. And so the existential foundation of anything created is God. Just as a house needs a foundation in order to remain standing, so the creature needs the Creator in order to maintain its being. But everything I just said should be taken with one tiny grain of salt. The essential union of God and the creature can't be perfectly defined. Words ultimately fail.

"But having said that, we might use an analogy to get a crude idea of just how intimately connected the human being is with the Creator. The things of Heaven have analogs here on Earth. The natural world is like a mirror of the celestial world. God's creations reflect in some way the divine nature. And the tree is one of them.

"When we look at a tree, do we find a line separating the leaf from the tree that gives it life? Where does the leaf end and the tree begin? Because the tree isn't the leaf, correct? So there has to be some dividing line between the two. But does that line exist? We don't find it when we scour the tree with our eyes. The mind invents a line, and so we distinguish 'part' from 'whole', and thus 'leaf' from 'tree'.

"There exist no discrete elements in the tree—all exist in a continuum of wholeness. Using the above as an analogy, where is the line that separates the being of the Creator from the being of the human person? There isn't one.

"Actually, God transcends what we call 'essence' and 'substance'. What we define as 'essence' is finite and limited. Only two discrete essences, both finite and limited in nature, can be separate. Thus the ant is separate from the elephant. And the minnow is separate from the gargling brook. There *is* a mystical reality in which all creatures are one. But only two finite essences can be separate in one way or another. God and the human being aren't two finite essences because God is *infinite* in nature.

"Continuing with the tree analogy, we can say that a leaf dies when it falls from its tree, but it also doesn't cease to exist. The same can be said of the man or woman who falls away from God. The soul's light dims because of sin, and so in a sense it dies, but it's not the end of existence. Eventually the body dies too, but its existence doesn't end there either. The human spirit is eternal, but in what state shall its eternal existence be? That depends on the words, thoughts, actions

and failures of one's life, and on whether one has atoned for those falls. The truth is that we choose our eternal state.

"But in allowing ourselves to ponder these things, we can see the truth about what we are. All the leaves on a tree are one with the tree itself, albeit at myriad points. We humans tend to believe that proximity on the tree of the human family makes us related, while distance means that we're not related. In truth, all the leaves come from the same tree and receive from it the same liquid sustenance. We're all leaves on the same tree! Some grow on this particular branch and others on another branch. But we form one body. We're separate beings, yet also one. There's a paradox for you.

"It's a truth that already exists. We only need to believe it now. If only one soul in the entire world truly loved all others, that soul would pray every day for their salvation with unlimited desire. And unlimited desire would eventually transmute into perfect faith, which inspires God to saving action.

"With this love in our hearts, we'd desire that everyone be saved and subsequently elevated into the godhood of the deified in Heaven. When we read of the Prodigal Son in the Bible, one of the first lessons we learn is that bitterness often emerges within even some of the faithful when they see God's extraordinarily favorable treatment of the convert. But in loving everyone else as one's self, and this perfectly, we arrive at the point of self-annihilation. There's no ego, no pride and no self-centeredness. Resentment and bitterness can't exist therein.

"At this point on the individual's spiritual journey, there exists no distinction between 'self' and 'other', because the two are mystically identical. One's self doesn't exist apart from the other, and the other doesn't exist apart from one's self. Self, other and God are all one in a transcendent way.

"The truth is that we have to learn to really love one another, because if our nature was degraded in the Fall then shouldn't we want to regain the ability to love *all* others? But

we shouldn't just settle for what we lost in the Garden. We can enjoy an even higher blessedness, by God's grace.

"Let's consider the possibility that in the beginning we were created as an intelligent species that naturally possessed the inherent knowledge of which you spoke earlier, Father. In that universal knowledge, the stranger simply can't exist. We know each other inherently. Therefore, this knowledge doesn't come by way of exterior information. Rather, it's built into our nature. And so in the beginning it was in no way necessary for two individuals to take in sense information—by way of exterior interaction and conversation—to know each other.

"Christ didn't come to restore us to this reality, but to take us higher. Much higher. Imagine a great city in Heaven—the Body of Christ. And the citizens are one in mind and heart, a single body, living in the deified state, the very life of God. Their love for one another is unconditional, perfect, absolute and endless. Flawless love and complete knowledge abound forever. This eternal city begins on Earth. But only in the world to come will it be complete.

"But even now, in our fallen human state, the stranger is lovable—but only because such love lies above our fallen nature. In fact, it isn't of this world. And actually, it's not of this universe, because it's from God, who transcends all created universes. But again, it's a love that knows all other persons not through the knowledge which can be acquired through the senses, but in the Spirit. The Spirit instills the heart with this knowledge.

"You know, I remember reading something about a preacher who was taken by a police officer to a crash site at which three small unearthly creatures were lying on the ground near a saucer-shaped vessel. Two of the creatures were dead, the third barely breathing. The latter's chest rose and fell almost unnoticeably. The preacher raised his hands over the three and proceeded to offer *prayers*, fervently

praying over the nearly-dead extraterrestrial. This account moved me greatly.

"Even if this story is a hoax, I think that some human beings, if the opportunity presented itself, would have more love for extraterrestrial creatures than they would for their own kind—or even their own family. And we naturally tend to value our love for family above all others.

"Just like in that scene...I can't remember the movie...in which Gene Hackman's character and his family are at dinner. And he says something about how a person's blood—one's biological family—matters the most in life. That all others are just strangers. Such a mindset is fatal, because it opens the door to unnecessary division. And this is because, though the words are true, they leave out an even more important truth.

"It forces every stranger in the world into a bubble of existence apart from one's bubble of loved ones. And so the stranger might as well not exist. On this fallen world of ours, strangers virtually don't exist to one another. It's an 'us versus them' worldview. Every family for itself. My family versus your family versus those of the rest of the world. *Division*.

"If we truly wanted to, we could hold in our hearts that higher love that embraces all others. In doing so we love God. '*Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me*'. When we do good to another person, we love God. It's that simple. But with what *intensity* should we love God? '*You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul and with all of your mind*'.

"But if one loves God more than all else, shouldn't one be willing to die on a cross for God, although in reality such a sacrifice will probably be unnecessary? Let's assume that the true believer should be willing to die on a cross for God. With this as a given, we've been commanded by the Lord, if not to die on a cross for each other, then to *seek* for this kind of love.

"That's because we've been commanded to love one another *as our God loved us* in Christ. '*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you*', said Jesus in the Gospel of John. And Christ our God loved us to the point of dying on a cross for us all. We should love one another as God loved us. And that love was so great that God made the ultimate sacrifice for everyone in the world.

"As I see it, the true disciple of the Way—the Christian of whatever denominational bent—is willing, or at least willing to *seek* for the desire, to die on a cross for all. But for what, exactly? So that everyone can live comfortable, worldly lives? So that they can enjoy good health and abundant wealth? So that they can own ritzy estates, million-dollar yachts and every luxury under God's good Sun? So that they might enjoy such *unalienable* rights as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

"No, dying on a cross for another is so exalted a thing as to be suitable only for something of infinite, eternal import. Life perfectly blessed and unending. In a word, *salvation*. We should be eager to die on a cross for the salvation of everyone in the world. For the vast majority of Christians, this won't be a cross in the literal sense of the word, but rather a life in which daily sufferings and personal sacrifices are offered up for the spiritual benefit of everyone under Heaven.

"On a certain level, to sacrifice one's life makes sense only if it's for God. And so when Christ our God implicitly asked us to die on a cross for each other, He was asking us to see one another as God in a way. A radical commandment. He knew we aren't God by nature, but he wanted us to love each other as if we were, knowing that our future selves would be transformed *by* God *into* God...that we'd become partakers of Divinity by grace. We're royalty in this life: creatures of God in the divine image. But in the life to come we'll participate in the divine existence. We'll have a share in it. Therefore, if we can be willing to *die* for God, our love should impel us to be willing to die for one another also.

"In my favorite science fiction TV series, *Babylon 5,* there's a powerful scene in the episode *Moments of Transition*, in which one of the characters, Delenn, is willing to die for her people, an alien race called the Minbari. She's perfectly willing to pay the ultimate price for her people so that the civil war on her planet might end with her death. But the individual who opposes her, the top military leader of the Minbari, is unwilling to give his life towards the same end.

"She belongs to the religious caste of her world, and he belongs to the warrior caste. After spending a few minutes in a lethal circle of light to prove that she's willing to sacrifice herself, Delenn's life is saved at the last moment by one of the warrior caste, who steps into the circle and removes Delenn, giving his life instead. In the end, a single member of an alien race dies for his people and their war-torn world.

"Another of my favorite scenes is in the film *Why Has Bodhidharma Left For The East?* About halfway through the movie, an aged Zen hermit and his young disciple exchange monologues in which they talk about the historical Buddha and how the Buddha's departure from the world wasn't an abandonment of the world, but a paradoxical returning to the world. This 'returning' meant that the Buddha drew closer to the world's people in a spiritual manner. By escaping from the company of everyone, he came closer to everyone. Because if your intention is to be one with only those you know and love, you can't be one with everyone else. By getting away from everyone you arrive more easily at the realization that it's possible to be one with everyone.

"In other words, by leaving your loved ones for life, you eventually learn how to get rid of the idea that you can be one in spirit with only them. And the escape from such exclusivity leads to the epiphany that it's far better to be one in spirit with everyone than with only a few—even if they're family. In being one with everyone, you're one with your loved ones *and* with

everyone else. Before, you excluded almost everyone in the world. But now, though you still favor your loved ones, your heart has room for the whole human family.

"It might help to think of the married couple. A married person is joined to another, clinging to the beloved in wedlock. But the unmarried person, in not being attached to any one person, is able to be one with everyone. I'm not talking about a sexual oneness, of course. It's a spiritual reality.

"If you're exclusively bound to a particular person, how can you say that you're one with all others? On some level you can claim to be one with all, but it can't be a complete, perfect unity, because perfect unity has no exclusive aspect. And so those who deride the likes of monks, hermits and nuns for leaving society and for leaving their families—and above all the joys and fruits of conjugal love—fail to grasp what exactly the seekers are seeking, even if the seekers don't realize it: a total oneness with all, beyond the physical, made possible in and through God.

"But getting back to the movie...the disciple begins to question the value of a life dedicated to 'saving living beings' and is tempted to quit the monastic life and return to the world. This temptation is common. It's experienced by all who live the monastic or religious life. He has doubts about the path ahead and wants to turn back to his former life, because the burden of working for the salvation of others is a heavy one. In a way, the monk, nun and hermit let go of the people they've loved for years. The disciple in the movie is being called to do the same.

"But at one point, his grief over 'abandoning' his family proves too much for him, and he tells the old hermit that he's returning to the world. It's in our nature to forsake an altruistic pursuit, or to consider doing so, if later we feel that in devoting ourselves to it we're in a very real way betraying those we hold most dear. Be that as it may, the vineyard still needs workers, regardless of whether or not the workers have family and friends

back home. The Christian disciple is called to take part in God's plan to save the world. For some this means leaving—without forsaking—one's family and friends for a life hidden in Christ.

"Zen Buddhists are on a similar mission. Granted, their salvation differs from Christian salvation. But they can sense that something's wrong with the world, and that humankind needs to be saved from *something*. They sense that *everyone* needs salvation—in one form or another. The most important thing is that their desire is universal. Do we as Christians even think about all other people, much less the role we can play in securing their eternal happiness? Sure, as mere creatures we don't do the saving, but our deeds and prayers can move the heart of God to act towards that end.

"In our Mass intentions, services and rites—basically in all our ceremonies, prayers and litanies—there are few if any explicit supplications for the salvation of every last person in the world. To my knowledge, nowhere do we see this except in a defunct form of the consecration of the host at Mass. The current wording in the rite refers to the sacrifice of Christ as being offered 'for many' instead of the previous 'for all'.

"It might be that this change is a truer translation of the words of Christ. But that shouldn't stop us from offering up the most fervent prayers, both official and otherwise, that explicitly beg God for the salvation of all. It's possible that I've come across a few such prayers before, but their terse wording obscures the necessary sense of urgency.

"Salvation demands that the soul become a flawless jewel. But while we live in the body, we can at least make a beginning of this and later arrive at that relative perfection that the saints enjoyed on Earth. The ability to accept the ugliness of life is part of this.

"In *Why Has Bodhidharma Left For the East?*, the Zen Buddhist priest tells his disciple that perfection can be achieved by embracing all things, including the 'dust and garbage' of the

world. He refers to the dust and garbage of life. The things we find loathsome. The things that make us suffer. The crosses.

"And what are some of the most loathsome things in the world? Those we despise. Those we hate. Those who are our enemies. If we seek perfection in all truth, we must embrace even them. And what greater thing can we do for them than to pray and *work* for their eternal happiness?

"Like prayer, *action* is necessary. When combined with prayer, I believe that charitable works inspire God to perform great wonders and miracles. Prayer is necessary, but acts of charity substantiate, in God's eyes, the prayers of the heart.

"I believe that as disciples of the Lord we need to do more than just pray. We have to act! Prayer alone isn't enough. Prayer by itself, although necessary, is inadequate. We need to do more than just move our lips. Why is it that so many prayers go unanswered? In my opinion, a prayer without an associated action—a personal offering or sacrifice—is likely to carry much less weight before God, if any at all.

"Some of our brothers and sisters in the Christian faith tell us that Christ died once and for all, and that our personal offerings and sacrifices are unnecessary. In a way they're right. Our offerings and sacrifices do absolutely nothing to open the way to Heaven, because that's what Christ did. The sacrifice of His life opened the gates of Heaven to us. But opening a gate isn't the same as stepping through. One can choose not to enter. No one is forced through the Gates of Heaven.

"And this is why conversion is important. To be saved, a heart must first be changed, even if such conversion takes place in the moment before death. God will never grab hold of a person and force him or her through one of Heaven's gates. God doesn't work in that manner. High and mighty creatures often do—by forcing their will on others. But not God. The Creator respects the free will of creatures, and will never force anything, above all salvation, on any of them.

"In time, the individual chooses between two eternals: God and Anti-God. But prayer and acts of self-sacrifice can influence a great number of souls in their eternal decisions. Prayer *and* works. It's not one or the other. It's both. We do our part in the divine work of salvation by faithfully utilizing these spiritual weapons.

"Look at the good and true soldier. He or she is willing to suffer so much for love of country. Harsh physical training. Severe weather. Hunger. Thirst. Lack of sleep. Death.

"And so if there's any such thing as spiritual warfare, who wouldn't believe that the spiritual soldier needs to make personal sacrifices also? We're in a war, and acts of personal sacrifice are the ammunition we need to *win it all*. Our prayers are the weapons we hold. But we don't want to show up on the battlefield well-armed with sniper rifles and machine guns but without the bullets to shoot them! And these are holy works.

"We should always keep in mind the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who pointed out to the disciples that some evil spirits can be exorcised only by prayer *and fasting*. The authoritative words of Christ lend Biblical support to the idea that works of personal sacrifice, and not prayer alone, are necessary in our fight against the unseen powers.

"What are some examples of the sacrifices offered by the spiritual warrior who fights for the salvation of souls? The little things. Giving up some pleasures, a little here and a little there. Abstinence on occasion. Embracing hardship when it comes. Offering up the small things. Taking it step by step. In sickness, accepting every bit of the suffering to the very end, with the intention that the suffering itself be transformed by God into spiritual grace for those who need it. In health, taking on the harder jobs at work or even at home, especially those tasks that involve demanding manual labor, and then offering up all the physical hardship for the conversion, salvation and deification of others.

"Many would object, saying that they *already* sacrifice enough due to the cruel demands of their day-to-day lives and careers. Fair enough. It might be that they're missing one thing alone: the intention. Maybe the vast majority of people already experience quite enough pain and suffering in their busy lives. But perhaps many don't offer all of it to God for the temporal and spiritual benefit of others. Some of us might be willing to take on additional crosses for the cause, and some might not. That's okay. The key is the intention.

"Non-Catholics have an abundance of ways to join the fight, if they choose. They don't have to abstain from meat on Fridays. It's very possible to engage in spiritual warfare without fasting—or even abstaining from certain types of food.

"But it all begins with small moves, becoming in time great acts of charity. My hope is that before I leave this world, more people than ever will offer up to God all of what they are, their whole being, for the salvation—and thus the deification—of everyone everywhere. A relative few may be called to literal martyrdom. But for the majority of us, the goal is a perpetual offering of self via the denial of self.

"Hardship and sacrifice are offered, in the hope that the old and fallen self may pass away, giving way to the new. The new life is one in which each moment of the day, whether it's lived in pain or in joy, in sickness or in health, is offered up to God for the salvation of souls. This martyrdom is the way of the modern-day Christian. The interior life we're searching for is a cut above the one we live now. It's what every one of us is called to be. *Saints*.

"But acts of self-sacrifice should be made willingly. No one should be forced to make them. They're taken up willingly, not because one finds pleasure in suffering, but because one finds pleasure in the object for which the suffering is endured. When we do it for the temporal and spiritual benefit of others, we experience joy. Or at least we should.

"It's true that acts of sacrifice take a toll on the offerer. But a great many souls—in fact all souls—are in need of them. And it's in human nature to recoil from the crosses of life. These burdens, therefore, shouldn't be forced on anyone.

"It follows that to inflict pain on others, especially to the point of death, is to work against nature. Powerful individuals in the early days of the Faith sought to put all Christians to death, perhaps because in their minds there was nothing wrong with martyring those who wanted to be martyred. So why not kill the Christians? It's what they wanted, right?

"I would be so bold as to assert that the martyrs of the Way, especially the earliest of them, were so ablaze with their faith that they were not only willing to suffer death, they craved it. I think most modern believers will never realize such love in this world, and that includes myself. Most of us will never rival the likes of Ignatius of Antioch or any of the early martyrs. They hungered—one may say they starved—for their crosses. But although giving their lives for the Gospel was the martyrs' *desire*, their persecution and torture was wrong.

"For most Christians in the world, martyrdom might be defined, in keeping with the 'Little Way' of Thérèse of Lisieux, as a life of small sacrifices offered for the world's salvation. It's the essence of the true Christian way, the same as shedding every drop of one's blood for the Gospel. Not everyone has arrived at this high peak. I know I haven't. For me, sainthood is a mirage. It vanishes every time I run towards it. But at least I have a destination and the desire to get there. At least I'm back on the right path. At least I have the Dream.

"Because the Dream is a future that's made possible by faith. Many will doubt that it's possible. But faith manages. The hands of God are everywhere in the world, always working towards this end. We only need to *believe*.

"When the Dream abides in your heart, you realize that everyone is precious, up to and including the stranger. It might

help us on a rational level if we do a little thought experiment. Imagine a female astronaut piloting a small spacecraft, alone by herself, adrift in the deep black of space between galaxies.

"She's had no contact with anyone for weeks and is on the verge of insanity. Suddenly, a stranger materializes on her ship. Although she's frightened by his sudden appearance, they begin to converse. He remains on the ship for an extended stay and they become more than just friends.

"A mere stranger delivers our desolate astronaut from madness. That such an individual could provide psychological healing and comfort at a time of uttermost need says a great deal about the inherent worth of those we don't know. They possess utility, even if that utility exists as pure potential. And by having utility, they have worth. This worth exists in parallel to the unlimited worth they possess as creatures made in the image of God. The truth of the stranger's inherent worth—in the form of his or her utility—is ever-present, and it exists as pure potential until he or she performs a charitable act.

"We could pose a question: 'What would happen if we could duplicate the situation of the female starpilot, but in a parallel timeline or dimension and with another stranger? The same need for company would arise in the woman again. Now just imagine this happening a third time, and a fourth, and a fifth, and so on. Each time it happens in a different timeline. And each time it happens with another stranger. Regardless of whether the experiences occur in the past or future relative to her consciousness, the woman remembers them as if she had lived through each of them, although in truth each took place in its own separate reality. All of these experiences converge in her mind as *real memories*.

"The woman eventually realizes the inherent worth of the stranger. I think we should be ready to embrace in our hearts those we don't know, even if they've done nothing good for us. Because it should be enough that they're *inherently capable* of

doing us good, whether they've actually done so or not. In any case, they're images of God the Creator and deserve to be loved for that reason alone.

"That's why we're able to love strangers. We may think that we know nothing about them, but that's not true. We know that they possess immortal and undying souls made from the light of God, so to speak. Each person is a ray of the Creator's light as it were. And that's reason enough to love *all* of them. Because they're beautiful, created in the image of the Eternal Beauty. The human heart is able to love anyone—even the stranger—for *what* they are, even if it lacks the knowledge to love them for *who* they are.

"In loving others besides family and friends, some well-intentioned individuals sometimes get chastised for going too far. We see a fictional example of this in one of my favorite movies, *Life of a King*. Eugene Brown, the main character of the movie, is a recently released convict who gets a job as a janitor. He wants to make up for ruining his relationship with his daughter and son while he lived a drug-filled life of crime.

"Eugene tracks his daughter down and reaches out to her. She rebuffs him at first. But in the process of winning back his daughter and his son, he establishes a chess club for the teenagers who attend the school where he works.

"His daughter, still indignant because of his neglect, basically tells him that he cares more about other people's kids than his own. There's a natural wisdom in that, but Mr. Brown was on the right track. Sure, he needed to provide for his own kids *at least as much* as strangers' kids, but he was working on that. Just because he hadn't gotten everything right doesn't mean that he should've abandoned his pursuit.

"The kids he was spending so much time with weren't strangers. But at the same time they weren't family. And yet he loved them still. Here we have a saint of the city, willing to love not only his own blood but non-family also. This concern for

other people's sons and daughters points to a greater reality, one that I believe we should strive for. At the very least, we can ponder the possibility of a much different world.

"You know, sometimes I like to see the Dream through a metaphorical lens. In one of my favorite science fiction epics, the *Foundation* book series by Isaac Asimov, a device called the Prime Radiant stores mathematical equations and projects them so that they can be viewed on vertical surfaces such as walls. These equations show the future of humanity. The Prime Radiant was designed by a scientist named Hari Seldon, who crafted a bold, monumental plan to rescue humankind from a prolonged Dark Age.

"The human race was scattered throughout the galaxy, inhabiting countless worlds, each world being part of a vast and aged Empire. But the Empire was in an advanced stage of degeneration. In other words, it was dying. And the prediction was that a new Empire would rise from the ashes of the old, but only after an extended duration of time. But Seldon's plan aimed to shorten the extent of this Dark Age, because it couldn't be prevented altogether. The Prime Radiant was the tool by which Seldon could see the decline—and his desired renewal of—the Galactic Empire.

"When I first read the *Foundation* books, I couldn't help but see the Seldon Plan as a metaphor for the Dream. One might very well say that I have a Prime Radiant of my own. And it's telling me, by way of infinitely simple equations written in a language that's completely spiritual, that every man, woman and child who lives during the period of my life will be saved. Although they may have to suffer through the Dark Age of this world, untold happiness awaits them all."

Camillus took a seat and weighed what he'd just heard. He had good reason to play the devil's advocate. "Adam, you have the true faith. Everyone wants endless happiness, but a

true Christian loves one's neighbor as one's self. And so to be a true Christian is to desire the eternal happiness of everyone other than one's self. The crux of the Faith is to love all others like this, because mystically 'the other' is one's self. That's why Christ commands us to love our neighbor so.

"But before I can accept the idea that everyone in the world can be saved so that not a single individual who lives during your lifetime is ever lost, I'd like to know what you think about the statistical probability of their choosing *not* to reject God. That's an exceedingly large number of souls. From the moment of your conception to your death, we're talking about *billions* of souls. And not one of them can choose to live in an eternally ruined state if your dream is to come about. That *is* what's necessary. I'm sure you realize this. You proposed the idea that God might create universe after universe until a perfectly moral one finally emerges, but we're talking about our present reality here. When it comes to your Dream, we don't have the luxury of waiting for the perfect cosmos."

"Faith manages, Father. You should know better than to employ statistical probabilities when it comes to matters of faith. If this miracle were held in only one heart without doubt, the Almighty would be moved to action. God would reach out and touch every godless soul, seducing it into a sudden and complete transformation—a course correction in a manner of speaking. Look at what happened to Saul while he was on his way to Damascus. He was on a certain path to spiritual ruin because he was laboring most zealously against God and thus against what was right, good and true. But in a single instant the Lord changed him. From *Saul* to *Paul* in the blink of an eye.

"Tell me that God can't appear this way to innumerous people in the moment before death and work a miracle like this but on a global scale. You can't tell me it's impossible. You know

that a miracle of such magnitude is well within God's power to work. This is child's play for the One who enjoys total, eternal and absolute freedom from all conceivable obstacles. Space, matter and time neither affect nor confine the divine nature in the least."

"Alright, alright. That's fair enough, Adam. I hear what you're saying. But let me ask you this. If they believe in your Dream, why would the world's sinners repent, or the agents of evil have a change of heart?

"What reason would they have to amend their lives? If they're going to be saved by a God whose heart is moved to perform such a wonder, why would sinners give up their sinful ways? Instead they might just double down.

"I mean, if after learning about the Dream they believe that they're going into the Kingdom no matter what happens, hedonists have no real reason to forsake their pleasures. Why wouldn't they just eat, drink and be merry, indulging in wanton behavior and endless orgies and all kinds of debauchery until they faint from the gluttony of it all? And if everyone's going to be saved, why would those who worship evil cease to do so? Why would they live in accord with God's ways if the greatest sinners in the world believe that they're going to be eternally happy no matter what they do, say or think in this life?"

Adam quickly raised his hand to interrupt. "Because they'd do well to consider that although salvation will in truth be theirs, the suffering of their purification might be beyond imagination, even the imagination of the happy souls who've passed on from this transitional state. The fire that purifies is the same as that which imparts the most sublime bliss in the highest heaven.

"But their spiritual purgation would amount to a self-inflicted torture as a pitiful result of the filth they've heaped upon

themselves. And only divine fire can burn it off. Spiritual fire. That's the price they'd pay.

"And so it comes down to how bearable they want their purification to be—and the length of its duration. The suffering can range from slightly painful to unimaginable. It can last for a short while or for a long time—or for a seeming eternity.

"Imagine a quasi-eternity of untold suffering and agony without a moment's rest. That's not a reality that anyone would wish to experience. And so wisdom requires the right and true attitude here.

"It's worth reiterating the teaching of the Church—that this suffering wouldn't be God's doing. Purgatory is necessary only because the fires of God's love must remove the spiritual rust that accumulates with every personal sin. The rust has to be burned off. And so it hurts!

"Sinners can blame only themselves for the necessity of this suffering. Their own choices make *them* responsible for the fear, whether it resides within themselves or within others. Because were it not for the existence of this cathartic reality—to which sin is the key—there would be no reason at all to fear it. Everyone should have a healthy fear of suffering, especially suffering of the everlasting kind. Fear of suffering is objectively good, because it can move one to do everything necessary to avoid it. Not all fear is bad."

Letting out a sigh, Adam rose from his chair. The Dream had some caveats, and it was important to point them out. "But there's something else that I need to add here, Father. It may be that God will grant the Dream, but with stipulations. It's possible that God will make exceptions for sinners who take the Dream for granted, failing to amend their lives in the expectation that they'll be saved no matter what. But if there are exceptions, the Dream no longer exists as such. In that case we come full circle to the reality that many—or at least some—won't be saved.

"And so maybe there won't be any exceptions and all will be saved. Then again, perhaps there *will be* exceptions. Who can really say for certain? Herein lies a mystery. Maybe the vigor of our faith and the quality of our charitable works will determine what happens.

"But we need to consider something else. The Dream in no way nullifies Christian works of mercy. It doesn't remove the need for things like feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, counseling the doubtful and visiting the sick. It's not one or the other. It's both. In my opinion, we need to believe in—and pray for—the salvation of everyone in the world. But we also need to prove our faith with works of charity. This is how we show the world that we're truly disciples of the Lord.

"You may wonder why we need to do these things if we believe with all our hearts that the Dream will come true. Well, to begin with, the Lord charged us with the performance of these acts. That's reason enough. But aside from that, what would happen if but a handful of people come to believe in the Dream, and each of them dies having lost faith in it? It would be as though they never believed in it to begin with.

"But on the other hand, Christian works of mercy are often occasions for conversion, and thus salvation. When we feed the hungry, maybe it truly moves the heart of the one who receives that food. Maybe he or she was an unbeliever, or a lapsed believer. And in being fed by a complete stranger, he or she turns back to the Faith, crying, 'There *is* a God who loves me'. The same holds true for clothing the naked and the other works of mercy. We can't really know when such works will effect a complete change of heart in the recipient.

"Therefore, since we don't even know whether anyone who comes to hold the Dream in their hearts will persevere in it, we should never allow ourselves the luxury of forsaking the Christian works of charity. Everyone who eventually takes the Dream to heart, including myself, may die having lost faith in it.

But if we retain our Christian works, the works themselves will, sooner or later, move some individuals to a saving faith."

Camillus rose from his wooden rocking chair and made for the coffee maker. "Well, you certainly do have a way with words, Adam. I think it's safe to say that part of me almost can't buy into this Dream of yours. But the better part of me is all in. Now promise me that you'll never abandon it. Hold on to it, all the way to the grave. It's a treasure worth guarding with all your strength. Never let the world steal it from you!

"In the monastery—in this 'school of the Lord's service' as we like to call it—our concern is with the world's salvation. We continue that fight within the walls of this house—even to our dying breath. The salvation of souls is our work. And so every monastery is a barracks, but also a trench on the front lines. It's where the soldiers of God live together, and it's where they fight for the world's salvation. But never did I conceive of such a total victory, let alone that it was possible.

"In truth, our prayers are for the whole world, and yet our thinking is that many souls will be saved, but not all of them. Your dream, however, is a game changer. The sheer scale of it moves me to think of our holy father, Benedict of Nursia, and the vision he once had of God's light, which came to him in the likeness of a sunbeam. Within that beam of divine sunlight, the entire world was gathered together as one. This experience is recorded in the second book of Saint Gregory's *Dialogues*, and it seems to be mentioned in the lyrics of the old hymn, *Sequence On The Feast Of Saint Benedict*, specifically in the phrases 'innumerable posterity' and 'figure of the sun', found in Ruhland's *Gregorian Chant*.

"Deep within you, Adam, is something like the vision of Benedict. But it's manifesting as a desire rather than as a vision *per se*. Perhaps others have this desire also, but if so you may be the first to have expressed it in words.

"The most important thing is that you believe in it. If only one soul can truly believe that this prayer will be granted, I think you're right to say that it *will* be granted. And this is fatal to the Enemy's plans. Jesus said, '*If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it*'. The key word there is '*anything*'. And so, if by prayer, fasting, holy offerings and works of charity we can move God's heart to save every person in the world, it makes me think of the wonders we can do for those *not* of this world. Benedict had a vision of Earth illumined by the uncreated light of God, but does the light stop there? Doesn't it go out into the rest of the universe?"

CHAPTER TEN

Adam became as silent and motionless as a stone. Questions raced through his mind. Those not of this earth...does Father mean aliens? Does he really believe in little green men? If so, then what makes him believe that extraterrestrial beings exist?

"Father, who or what are you talking about when you say our efforts might help those not of this world?"

"I think you know the answer to that question. Look up at the sky at night and tell me that those lights are only for our viewing pleasure, or merely '*for signs and for seasons, and for days and years*'. Gaze at the stars and tell me that they serve no purpose in terms of harboring life. The true purpose of stars and planets isn't to serve as mere eye candy. It's not to serve as navigational aids, or for astrological divination. It isn't even to acquire esoteric knowledge by studying those stars in their spatial connections to ancient sites around the world. No, the highest purpose of the celestial bodies is to harbor life and to be sources of sustenance for it.

"I mean, if we need only specks of light for the marking of time and for navigation, then God could've just created *local* light sources. The existence of stars, planets and other stellar objects that are light-years distant from Earth wouldn't have been necessary in that case. But those twinkling lights at night aren't satellites. They're not within the bounds of our planet's atmosphere. Nor are they located just beyond it, as satellites are. They're burning fireballs that are in some cases thousands of light-years away and millions of miles in diameter.

"If you're the Creator of the cosmos, why go through the trouble of making such distant and massive fireballs when you could've made them not only much smaller, but closer to

the people of Earth who'd use those lights for individual utility? As local sources of light, surely they could've been created to traverse the sky according to whatever laws were necessary for them to serve in that capacity. But that's not the reality we have here. They exist as exceedingly distant and bright stellar objects. And they're so massive that they're virtually unlimited sources of energy.

"And so I think that God made each star and planet for life, including intelligent life. 'But life hasn't been found on the planets we've discovered so far', you may note. But it could be that they harbored life in the remote past, or maybe they'll do so in the distant future—even the *eternal* future. Or you might say, 'The conditions necessary for intelligent life probably don't exist on most worlds'. But can such conditions change? Can a planet be terraformed? Can a world be transformed by beings like angels? Or by a highly advanced galactic civilization? Or by the Creator directly? Genesis says that Earth '*was without form and void*'. It had to be prepared—in stages—for life. And who decided what the conditions for life are? Where no life is, life is possible. As it is written, '*For I say to you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham*'.

"Many individuals who believe in extraterrestrial life get easily discouraged because they can't find definitive proof of its existence. But where *is* the proof? Someone possesses the necessary evidence, because there are too many books, too many articles, too many leaked government documents and too many eyewitness accounts for all of it to be some grand fabrication or collective misperception of natural phenomena. Someone out there has all the evidence we need to prove that an extraterrestrial intelligence—or at least a *non-human* one—exists and abides on our world.

"But the evidence is being suppressed for a complex of reasons. If the powers that be desired it, they could arrange an official and public disclosure. But they're either unwilling to

do that or they're waiting for something. Still, we can utilize thought and reason to construct an argument which, although not absolute proof in and of itself, would provide a reasonable basis for belief.

"In searching for the origin of the *notion* of otherworldly intelligent beings, we can utilize reason to gather the evidence necessary to establish *rational* proof. It's worth considering this: Did ancient, prehistoric, primitive, and uncivilized humans possess a consciousness sufficiently developed to wonder if the mysterious beings that they saw came from other planets? Because we find ancient rock paintings all around the world that depict strange humanoid figures. But did these ancient peoples even know what a planet was, and that they inhabited one themselves? If they didn't know what a planet was, how could they conceive of beings from other *planets*? I suppose they could've reasoned that the beings were 'from beyond'—from physical places beyond the reach of their senses. But the point is that we really want to know *when* the idea of intelligent extraterrestrial life first entered the human mind.

"Is the concept ancient or modern? Did it originate in someone's imagination? Or was it a message from non-human beings? If it was, in fact, a message, then '*they*' simply wanted us to realize that people from elsewhere exist. They planted the idea of the Otherworlder in the human mind, and so they conveyed it to us in one or more forms of communication.

"They might've done this through visual art. Perhaps in a drawing, painting or symbolic representation of some kind. Or they could've done it by way of some form of writing. There is some support for the oft-maligned hypothesis that a highly advanced civilization existed on Earth long ago, one that was far older than what scientific orthodoxy holds as the world's official 'original civilization'.

"Thus, someone could've invented one or more forms of writing much earlier than what's officially accepted. And thus

extraterrestrials could've used such tools to communicate the fact of their existence to our ancestors. Or they could've done so through telepathy.

"But the idea of alien visitors, if it didn't originate in the human mind, has to be from an otherworldly source, or at least from a non-human source. Maybe the alien explanation is the likely one. Another possibility is the Source of all Sources—the Creator of all. If this is true, God could've sent an angel as a courier to communicate this fact. A *direct* revelation from God is also a possibility. Anyhow, if we look at it from an objective standpoint, a fifty-fifty chance exists that the idea originated in an alien mind.

"But if it originated in one of our own kind, then we can get quite philosophical about it. We can say that if the idea of intelligent extraterrestrial life can exist in the human mind—or in any adequately intelligent mind for that matter—then it has to reflect reality. Because what can exist in the mind either had existence in the past, or it has existence now, or it will have it in the future, either in this universe or another.

"I'm talking about a philosophical—an *ontological*—argument for the existence of extraterrestrial life, somewhat akin to the clever argument for God's existence propounded by Anselm of Canterbury. An easy way of putting it is that if we can imagine an extraterrestrial creature with intelligence and free will—one wholly alien to our common experience—that's either moral or amoral but not immoral, then it'll have concrete existence eventually because God *will* create such a thing. If we can imagine such a being then the idea must exist in God's mind as an eternal thought.

"This follows because God's mind has foreknowledge of all good things creatures have imagined and will imagine. The Eternal Mind contains an infinitude of ideas which are themselves good. And the idea of an intelligent creature from another world, be it moral, amoral or mixed, is always good.

"What a creature decides to do with its life is another matter. It may walk an evil path, but such a decision belongs to the being that exists in concrete reality, a being that's at least *capable* of morality. But we're talking about the mental idea of the creature as it exists in a platonic state before the actual creature makes any good or evil decisions.

"And so an idea that's inherently good, namely the idea of intelligent alien life, must exist in the Eternal Mind if it exists in the mind of any creature. But what exists in the Eternal Mind is created eventually, whether in this universe or another. This follows because in a certain sense the Creator has no choice but to eternally create things, since it's in the Creator's *nature* to bring creatures into existence. And the ideas of creatures, the 'mental models' as we might call them, exist in God's mind as an infinite number.

"Therefore, due to the fact that an unrelenting drive to create inheres in the divine nature, the Creator *must* bring this mental infinitude into a state of actual existence, albeit throughout eternity. The most fundamental part of this work occurs outside of Time. Even so, the contents of God's mind are eventually created and placed within the space and time of this or that universe.

"God's thoughts aren't the thoughts of mere creatures, which often don't get translated into reality because of their limitations. Our thoughts are dead, because we bring them to life only by hard work and effort. Those of God, on the other hand, are alive on a very real level. And that's because they're the mental products of Infinite Life. All creatures begin as ideas in the Eternal Mind. *There is nothing else for God to work with*.

"In other words, if we can think of intelligent alien life—and it's obvious that we can—then it exists *somewhere and somewhen* because it's an idea within the Creator's mind. No matter where or when, these beings' existence is guaranteed, because again they exist in the Divine Mind as eternal thoughts.

And God's living thoughts are inevitably brought into existence because, again, the impulse to create is natural to God, and an eternity exists for this impulse to work itself to fruition.

"Not a single inherently good idea in the Eternal Mind of God remains forever uncreated. And the idea of intelligent alien life is inherently good. That's the gist of it.

"But aside from the ontological argument, we can offer a simply logical argument. Imagine an omnipotent being going through the trouble of creating planet after planet—trillions of them or more—so that *one alone* would harbor intelligent life. In that case, why create such a ridiculous number of planets? Why make so many fireballs? To keep a lifeless cosmos warm?

"We've come nowhere close to discovering most of the universe's planets, so we can't seriously believe that they exist solely for our visual pleasure. It's true that we discover more as our technology advances. But most of the unnumbered worlds remain invisible to us. And I imagine that even an advanced starfaring civilization wouldn't possess the means to view every planet in the cosmos at one time. And so it's not all about the eye candy. There has to be another reason for the existence of a vast number of worlds, and that's to harbor life.

"But another possibility arises here. If the cold, hard truth is that alien life *doesn't* exist, then an entire universe of planets is ours for the taking. In such a case, one could easily argue that 'all these worlds' were made to serve as the future possessions of humanity. Knowing that one day humankind would go to the stars, maybe God's plan is that we should be fruitful and multiply on Earth *and* throughout the cosmos.

"After all, God didn't make the stars so that they'd burn everlastingly. The Sun will be gone billions of years from now. We can't remain here on Earth forever. We have to go out and colonize other worlds. If in discovering other habitable planets we find no life on any of them, maybe that's because *we alone* are meant to inhabit them.

"Whatever the case may be, all the planets and stars were made for God's glory. And one could say that their mere existence, and their beauty, give glory to God. But what gives God more glory? A beautiful planet *without* intelligent life, or a beautiful planet *with* intelligent life? Could there be any doubt?

"A planet devoid of life, or even one with non-intelligent life, glorifies God less than a world populated by intelligent beings with intellect and free will, and who are thus made at least to some extent in God's image. We must ask, therefore, why the Creator would freely choose the lesser of two glories. If God really desires the most glory on every world, then divine omnipotence would raise up higher life on each of them.

"We're confident, therefore, in proposing the principle that if the Creator desires maximal glory, then every planet in existence must harbor intelligent life at some point in time. If any given world contains no such life now, it either did in the past or it will in the future. *Even the post-eschatological future*.

"But even if a planet *does* happen to harbor life, it may be invisible to our eyes and instruments. Entire races may exist whose natures are ethereal, or whose bodies consist of some exotic form of matter or energy that we're unable to perceive or detect. Creatures with the ability to exercise free will and to reason—and thereby grow in their knowledge and wisdom—are destined to arise on every world in the cosmos. It may be in the far future, but my speculation is that every planet will be the homeworld of an intelligent race of beings at some point.

"As Doctor Malcolm said in *Jurassic Park*, 'Life finds a way'. Because the Creator will have it no other way. The infinite dignity and the infinite grandeur of the Eternal Deity demand the uttermost glory. And so God, in seeking maximal glory, will turn a wholly lifeless world, or one that harbors only life without intelligence, into one where creatures are capable of rational thought. The nature of this life, whether it's physical, energetic, spiritual or something else altogether, doesn't really matter as

long as it's intelligent. And remember that just because we've yet to discover intelligent life, it doesn't mean it's not out there.

"As Christians, we've inherited the doctrinal belief in non-physical people whose natures aren't human and whose intangibility makes them imperceptible to our natural senses. *Angels*. *Demons*. And yet even through the lens of our most advanced technology they remain invisible to us.

"Imagine discovering a world that seems to harbor no intelligent life. Would the thought even occur to you that it now contains, or did contain at one time, an advanced civilization of highly intelligent beings who've graduated from a physical existence into an intangible, invisible one? Or that this world has yet to be transformed into one with intelligent life?

"I think it's safe to say that some individuals may have no reason to consider these questions. But what I'm getting at is that if God created humanity on Earth, what reason would there be to stop there? I believe that the human race inhabits many worlds. And so our 'home' isn't a single world. Of course I have no proof of this. But I highly suspect it's true.

"One could easily question the idea that human life can arise somewhere else besides Earth. Because our world has unique physical and spiritual properties that we might need to be *human*. On the other hand, what if the definition of a human being isn't written in stone? What if the true definition changes with the planet? What if the definition of the human being on planet X differs from that on planet Y. The definition would vary because the two worlds are physically and spiritually unique.

"It's the chemical composition of a world, together with its spiritual 'vibe', that determine what it is to be human on *that* world. Even on Earth humans aren't all exactly the same. Here on our homeworld, we're classified into a number of 'races'. So why can't different human races exist on other worlds?

"I *believe* that otherworldly human beings are here and that they're here to guide us. And I believe that relatively few of

us 'Earthers' have visited their worlds. But their worlds are ours and vice versa. Because we're *all* human. Only different.

"One argument against a multitude of worlds inhabited by humans is that humanity, wherever it happens to exist, must descend *only* from Adam and Eve. As a matter of unity and solidarity. And so how can we possibly call those otherworldly populations 'human' if each has a different progenitor?

"But who's to say that the First Parents weren't taken to populate other worlds with their progeny, or that their progeny weren't taken thus? God, whose hands shaped the cosmos itself, could've done this. Or an angelic power. Or a starfaring race. *They* could've arranged for such a transport.

"There's also the idea that the human body before the Fall was like Christ's risen body. It could go through walls and move instantaneously. But Christ's ascension took him beyond space and time. And the ability to transcend space and time implies *a fortiori* the ability to come and go among the stars.

"Thus, it's possible that if Adam and Eve before their fall possessed bodies even remotely akin to the risen body of Christ, they could've seeded other worlds with their offspring. There's no way to know what duration of time existed between the First Parents' creation and their fall from grace. However, Scripture tells of great men who came after the First Parents, men whose lives spanned hundreds of years, some a hair shy of a thousand, *and this in a fallen state*.

"Therefore, if we don't take as literal Adam's 930-year lifespan as given in Genesis, we wouldn't be wrong to propose that Adam and Eve lived for a few thousand years. But part of their lives came *before* the Fall, which robbed them of their primal abilities. So what can we say, regarding the time they had before the Fall, about their seeding other planets?

"I think it's quite conceivable that the First Parents went out into the cosmos and populated *many* planets. And I'm not including in the category of otherworldly human races those

intrepid souls who've colonized other worlds in modern times as members of purported secret space programs. Basically, what I'm talking about here are human races that were either created directly by God on other worlds, or were transplanted long ago from Earth to other planets, or were born on other worlds in ancient lines of descent from the First Couple.

"In short, it's the idea of otherworldly human races that aren't genetically identical to human races on Earth. However, their genetic makeup would be so close to ours that they can rightly be called 'human'. I truly believe that human beings on Earth aren't alone with God and the angels, even if it turns out that non-human extraterrestrials don't exist."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Adam just couldn't buy it. Human populations on other worlds? That seemed like a long shot. “Okay, but if Adam and Eve or their progeny seeded other worlds, or if God created human races on other worlds, then how is it that such groups are able to travel here, while we struggle just to go to the moon and the planets in our solar system? Did they evolve technologically at a vastly accelerated rate compared to us?

“How could it be remotely possible that otherworldly humans set a course for Earth and then traversed the stars to arrive here? Have you even considered the virtual impossibility of traversing the universe in any practical way? The distances are quasi-infinite. They might as well be infinite.

“It seems to me that the level of technology required to accomplish this would remain entirely outside the ability of any physically constituted race. No matter how ancient it is. How would a human population on some far distant world be able to develop the technology to travel to Earth and be back home in time for supper?”

It was a question to which Father Camillus had given much thought in his life. And he had three possible answers. “Technological development might've been unnecessary. What if cosmic highways were built into the fabric of the universe? If intelligent life exists on other planets, human or otherwise, and if they're visiting Earth, then maybe their visitations aren't due to the utilization of *any* technology, whether it belongs to them or to a supremely advanced race. What if completely natural means of cosmic transportation exist?

“Or maybe human populations on other worlds didn't fall from grace. And so their physical, mental and spiritual abilities enabled them to visit us without the need for technology—or to

develop technology at 'a vastly accelerated rate' compared to us. Another possibility is that they fell from grace as we did, losing certain natural abilities that crippled their evolution.

"But in that case they'd be direct creations of God and would have their own progenitors. And they'd be older than us. And so they would've had more than sufficient time to recover, subsequently advancing in spiritual and technological terms long before we set foot on the Moon. Or they're roughly as old as we are, but one or more starfaring civilizations helped them to recover and advance quite rapidly."

Adam appeared wholly confused. "When you suggest that they could've traveled to our world by natural means, are you talking about something that God created? I really don't think that's the answer, because what then is the purpose of 'flying saucers'? You can't just dismiss the reports of witnesses who've seen these objects. Footage exists that, even though it may prove little definitively, we must consider if we want to be objective and fair. And then there are the claims of those who say they've worked in projects to reverse-engineer alien craft. If such things exist, then our visitors arrived here using those."

Camillus elaborated. "Let's suppose that their craft are capable of doing some really amazing things: instantaneous or near-instantaneous travel, phasing into and out of physical form, et cetera. This doesn't necessarily mean they have the ability to traverse the stars at superluminal speeds. The speed of light would be insufficient for exploring most of the life in the cosmos because the majority of inhabited worlds would be in galaxies other than one's own.

"The distance between one galaxy and the next is so vast that it dwarfs the distance between the two farthest points in any one galaxy. If we posit that the diameter of the average galaxy is one hundred thousand light years, that means it takes

light *one hundred thousand years* to traverse *one* galaxy. And the speed of light is approximately one hundred and eighty six thousand miles *per second*. An extraterrestrial starship that could travel at the speed of light would simply not be able to explore most of its home galaxy in a timely manner. It would probably require a few years just to travel to its nearest star. Can the average alien explorer wait that long? Maybe through the utilization of suspended animation technology. But that's a few years of 'hibernation' just to arrive at the nearest star. How advanced would the technology need to be to allow a journey of decades, centuries or millennia at light speed?

"And even considering the fact that time dilation would cause the occupants to age at a far slower rate than anything exterior to the vessel, the obvious problem is that the universe outside 'ages' too quickly. If you're going to point B from point A to study point B for some reason, that reason may not exist upon arrival due to the phenomenon of time dilation, at least according to how I understand it.

At any rate, maybe alien craft *can* travel at the speed of light. Maybe they can move almost instantaneously like light. But even *that* isn't sufficient to arrive at most places in the universe in a practical time frame."

"Then how would they be able to travel here?"

"As I said before, it's possible they wouldn't have had to develop the technology. Suppose the Creator made currents through space—'cosmic drifts' let's say—that link worlds and galaxies to one another. And suppose that we don't see these cosmic currents because their respective portals are located down there". Camillus pointed towards the floor.

"Deep in the Earth. But if the openings aren't within the planet's interior, maybe they're in pyramids, concealed by walls of monolithic stone until they're finally discovered and activated.

Maybe they're at the bottoms of the oceans. Or under miles of antarctic ice. Or on one or more worlds nearby. Maybe they're invisible because they exist on a higher plane.

"Another possibility exists. What if the mind can serve as the 'power source' for interstellar craft? Doctor Steven Greer, an authority on otherworldly life and technology, claims that these beings use thought to power and pilot their craft somehow, if I understand him correctly. The pilot, and by extension the ship, tap into this thing he calls 'Universal Consciousness'.

"If it's possible to meld the physical and the mental so that extraterrestrial craft can interface with their pilots' minds, then highly advanced civilizations might be able to traverse the cosmos by issuing mental commands to their vessels. But the mind and its ideas are gifts from the One who made body, soul and consciousness. Therefore, mind-driven interstellar travel, in consideration of divine foreknowledge, is every bit a gift from the Creator. And so an alien race can't make the claim that it invented the reality."

Adam found the concept fascinating. But he couldn't understand how extraterrestrial ships could crash if they were light years beyond our technology. From his point of view this was one of the most mysterious aspects of the phenomenon. "Hmm. If extraterrestrials are using the power of thought to control their ships, then it's possible that a lapse in the pilot's thinking—or a glitch in the system that interfaces with the alien mind—caused at least some of the supposed UFO crashes.

"But could an external agent have caused the pilot—or pilots—to lose control of the craft, at least in some cases? Are some UFOs shot out of the sky by other extraterrestrial powers? Or could intelligent beings that are higher and more evolved than the average starfaring extraterrestrial be at work here?

"But we can also speculate that human technology was used. What technology can adversely affect an alien's mind and

thereby disrupt navigation? Can radar interfere with the alien craft itself, resulting in a crash?

"We can also ask whether a human *person* can be the cause. Is there a telepath powerful enough to affect the minds of alien pilots? To have the ability to damage or at least briefly disrupt the mind of the pilot, who might be thousands of feet away, or even miles away, seems unrealistic. But Greer in his books also writes about Technology-Assisted Consciousness, a synthesis some otherworlders utilize. Human telepaths with ungodly talent may exist who have privileged access to exotic alien technology that greatly enhances their abilities, abilities that are naturally superior to those of your average telepath, who's rare to begin with.

"When I think about telepaths with the ability to bring down alien craft, I think of mysterious figures in black attire. They wear dark shades, black fedora hats and black shoes that are polished to a high sheen. And they're possessed of extraordinary powers of the mind.

"An important part of their mission may be to provide various military, intelligence and industrial interests with alien technology. This technology can then be analyzed so that it can be replicated. Or used as a basis for lesser technologies.

"I think these individuals would be very much like the men in black from the TV series *Project Blue Book*. Those men wear black clothing as the monks do—only they're dressed in worldly attire. Their concern is with goings-on in the temporal world while you occupy yourselves with divine, eternal affairs. Perhaps some of them can be recruited into the Order. But then they might reciprocate and try to enlist a monk or two from this or that monastery. Such monks would be 'religious rogues', yet members of the *real* Men in Black.

"That distinction is necessary because I believe certain agents of darkness disguise themselves as 'men in black' and intimidate UFO witnesses by threat, thus sowing fear. These

agents of evil have been known to physically harm witnesses. Some are spectral in nature, others technological. But I'd bet the original and true outfit is human, or human in appearance. Anyhow, what do you think about the idea of human telepaths bringing down alien craft using technology-aided thought?"

Camillus acted as though he hadn't been interrupted. "But *why* would these advanced civilizations want to visit us? I think it may have something to do with their journey home to the Source, to a Creator who seems to favor the idea that intelligent creatures should possess truth through discovery. Discovering one's self, discovering one's soulmate, discovering one's God. There's real satisfaction in finding things out. So it's no wonder that God would..."

Visibly aggravated, and after a long exhalation, Adam forced the issue. "Father Camillus! What do you think about the idea that human agents are bringing down alien craft by technology-aided psychic powers? Do you think it's possible?"

The old monk walked over and looked Adam squarely in the eyes. "You'd do well to drop this. I think you're entering forbidden territory. The powers that be want to keep the world in the dark about the existence of secret operations, which are themselves part of deep black projects. No, you shouldn't dig too deep into the UFO phenomenon and anything associated with it, Adam. Let it go.

"Even trained remote viewers, who, while remaining in their bodies, can 'open' their consciousnesses to distant places and objects, have been murdered after learning too much. At least I've gathered as much after certain deep dives of my own. That should give you pause. Because if the psychic presence of someone engaged in such activity can be detected, and if such a person can be murdered without a trace of evidence, you

begin to suspect the existence of super-psychic handlers who manage the common remote viewer. Human or not, they'd be able to clearly perceive the invisible, psychic presence of the viewer and murder him or her by inflicting physical damage via telekinesis—or by mundane elimination methods.

"Whatever the truth may be, all murderers—even those with the most extraordinary and exotic of abilities—will answer for what they've done. They'll be brought before the Judge on high and be made to look into the spiritual eyes of those they killed and explain why they took their lives, which were gifts from the Giver of Life. But that's a matter for a particular day in eternity. Let's talk about why God would want us to encounter human races from other worlds."

Try as he might, Adam couldn't focus on what Camillus was saying. The idea fascinated him—that the telepathic mind aided by extraterrestrial technology could down alien craft. He made a mental note to do some digging while Camillus picked up where he left off.

"We love to discover the world. So why would it be any different with human races throughout the cosmos? God would want us to discover each other, and so it makes sense that we'd be given the natural means to do that: a God-created system of cosmic tunnels connecting distant points in the universe.

"But apart from the pleasure of discovery, what other reason would God have for us to find our human siblings from the stars? Why create other human races who are like us yet different? I mean, although they can be categorized as human, slight variations in physical constitution are inevitable.

"Some may have colorful, vibrant skin. Others may be taller or shorter than your average Earthling. Some may have exotic facial features or hair color. But chances are that many of them would manifest a combination of these differences.

"But is there another reason that God would want us to encounter otherworldly humans? Perhaps an encounter with them would prepare us for the ultimate encounter with *God*. An encounter with the eternal God is in a way an encounter with yourself—your infinite, eternal Self.

"God is truly closer to us than we are to ourselves, an unassailable truth given the fact of divine omnipresence, and because the divine substance permeates and suffuses every fiber of our being and is essentially united to it. But nobody can be closer to one's self than one's self. It therefore follows that God in metaphysical terms is *our true self*. Let's think of God, the Ultimate Mystery, as our eternal and infinite Self. But God is also 'other', and is thus one's 'self' and 'other' at once. A supreme, infinite Being that isn't any one of us, and yet the true Self of every single one of us. It's a mind-boggling paradox surpassed only by the mystery of how three Divine Persons can be one in being. A *single* being.

"When we come into contact with our human siblings from the stars, they'll be like us but different. Similarly, God is like us but different. We can think and reason; we can exercise free will; we can love. In these ways and many others, we're like God.

"But our Creator possesses qualities and abilities that utterly transcend ours. Meeting our 'star siblings' will give us a sense of what it'll be like to encounter God, because they'll be like God but different. The very experience of First Contact will prepare us to some extent for Ultimate Contact.

"But I've gone way off on a tangent here. So, the theory is that humankind exists throughout the cosmos, right? Not just Earth. And so myriad human homeworlds exist, connected by 'cosmic drifts'. However, the drifts are hidden from many human civilizations. But why 'many'? Why not all or none?

"Because many of the human groups out there wouldn't be able to handle such encounters. I don't think that we're ready

for such encounters ourselves. I believe that we're ready for an official *disclosure* of their existence, but I don't think that we're quite prepared for an open, public meet-and-greet.

"Anyhow, it's inevitable that some human populations would be more advanced than others in terms of technology and spirituality. And because human populations would vary widely in regards to their spiritual progress, they'd treat us differently, each according to its inner character. Some of them may be violent, or even sinister. It's certainly within the realm of possibility.

"The truth notwithstanding, many wouldn't believe that the universe contains a natural system of transportation. But the Earth possesses such systems. They're called 'rivers'. And if a planet can have them, why not the cosmos itself?

"A river is virtually unlimited as a source of life-giving energy, sustenance and transportation. I believe that cosmic 'rivers' exist. And I believe they were made so that humanity can go to the stars and explore them even before it develops the artificial means to do so.

"Perhaps one day we'll discover cosmic thoroughfares that link distant points in the universe. If they exist, they'll allow us to discover new life—human *and* non-human. However, we need to make one giant leap in our spiritual evolution before we're ready to meet our star siblings. God knows we do."

CHAPTER TWELVE

Adam thought about a theological question that he had come across in his personal studies. If humanity had been created on another world, would it have fallen from grace as it did on Earth? Would it have *sinned*?

"Okay Father, let's assume that humankind has many homeworlds—that a very great number of human populations inhabit countless worlds. Maybe one of these groups managed to avoid a debasement of its nature, unlike ourselves. They'd know nothing about a fallen state of existence. Having never been estranged from their Creator, thereby enjoying a pristine nature, they'd have natural abilities that we can hardly imagine in our current condition.

"And let's postulate that the Creator ordained that if in being tested a population didn't fall from grace, then it would be rewarded with the knowledge of, and eventual access to, the Cosmic Drifts. In proving themselves on a spiritual level, such a people would be entrusted with a certain stewardship over us. Maybe they're angels of some kind, messengers and guardians sent to shepherd primitive human groups.

"In passing a very big test, they proved themselves to be above lust and greed and war and every other kind of vice. Stated differently, with regard to Original Sin, mere innocence doesn't earn one the right to shepherd other populations. Such is the province of the proven race—one that wouldn't find out the hard way, during its time spent on other worlds, that it would succumb to the temptations to which it would be exposed."

Intellectually enlivened, Camillus leaned forward in his chair. "Very possible. We can also posit that the sin-devolved races would be given the opportunity to lift themselves up and

make their way back to God. At some point on their journey, they'd receive the knowledge of how to access the Drifts, or they'd discover this knowledge through their own seeking. In any case, the continued spiritual progress of redeemed races would eventually make the Drifts obsolete.

"As I said before, it might be that before their separation from God, the First Man and the First Woman here on Earth could naturally 'phase shift' into a spiritual or energetic form and back again. After all, we've discovered that matter and energy are equivalent, and a good number of the Church Fathers and later theologians have put forth various and sundry ideas about the nature of the human body in its unfallen state.

"Although not a deified thing, perhaps originally it was a supernatural entity relative to what it is presently. It would've possessed none of the quasi-omnipotent abilities of the truly deified body. Nevertheless, it could hide itself from the eyes of wholly physical creatures by shifting into an intangible state.

"The point is that human beings from other worlds may serve as messengers—i.e. 'angels'—sent to guide and guard those on Earth. Having the ability to morph into a non-physical form, they could dwell among us for any length of time without being seen. They'd desire nothing less than our divinization so that we could take our place in the celestial hierarchies.

"But this notion doesn't rule out the existence of angels traditionally understood—ethereal creatures of a non-physical and non-human nature. Existing as entirely incorporeal beings, they've been commanded to aid humanity so that it may draw closer to its Maker. Human and non-human angels can exist. They're not mutually exclusive. I believe in both."

Adam expanded the argument. "Yes, the word 'angel' does translate as 'messenger'. And since any intelligent being can serve as a messenger, a multitude of humanoid species could fill the angelic ranks."

Suddenly, a disturbed look appeared on his face. “But if humans can be angels, then maybe they can be 'demons' also. Malevolent human beings whose peoples have freely chosen to exist in a permanently negative vibratory state. Aside from the benevolent human races, maybe one or more negative groups have visited Earth. Ditto for borderline or neutral humans.

“It might also be true that intelligent non-human beings from other worlds, dimensions or universes have come here. I think many of them, at least those not sufficiently advanced in technological terms, would need to use the Drifts to explore our universe in a practical time frame. But on the other hand, some of them could possess the level of technology needed to traverse spacetimes, dimensions or universes, thereby making the Drifts obsolete.

“In any case I'm guessing that most of our non-human visitors are wholly physical in nature. But some might be able to transition between physical and non-physical forms. Some would be friendly and some not so friendly. Walking a middle path, some might be devoid of malevolent intent but would act in ways we'd perceive as hostile. Notice that I used the word 'perceive'. They may have no clue as to what good or evil is, and therefore they'd have no clue as to what right or wrong is, and thereby possess no hostile intent. In that case they'd be innocent. But this doesn't mean that their actions would always be morally acceptable in an objective sense.

“I think that some of the visitors would employ thinking servants—biological entities with artificial intelligence—to be their eyes and ears. Or the visitors might appear to us through holographic avatars. I know this is speculative, but why would a visiting race openly, directly and personally interact with us knowing our violent tendencies? Why would they give up their advantage of obscurity? I think they'd want to remain hidden in the shadows, working behind the scenes to do whatever it is that they're here to do.

"The more one knows about the master, the more one is able to hinder—or even undo—the master's work. It may be that the visitors have a 'Prime Directive' that forbids them from involving themselves openly in our affairs. And so although they may regularly observe a few select individuals—even interacting with such people at certain times—they do so through physical servants or the projection of avatars. In this way, proof of their existence is much harder to come by.

"But why are they here? Apart from a simple desire to seek out new life and new civilizations, or apart from a desire to guide us subtly towards an ever greater spiritual awareness, perhaps the visitors are here to save the human race on *this* world from physical extinction. In the far distant future, the Sun will grow cold and die out. And that'll be the end of Earth. If we haven't colonized other worlds by then, there will be no way for us to avoid annihilation, as we managed to do in the ice ages, global floods, meteorite impacts and comet strikes of the past.

"Eventually, we'll run out of time—unless we go to the stars. And we have to consider the possibility that the velocity of our progress, if left to Nature itself, might be insufficient for the cause. And so it's certainly possible that the otherworlders are here, in their own furtive fashion, to speed this process up. Maybe they've discovered that without their guiding hand, we won't make it in time.

"I wonder if they're emissaries of the one God, whose providence *does* employ angels in the divine plan, but also a mélange of creatures whose natures are basically identical to ours. That is, natures constituted by a mixture of matter and spirit. Because although all if not most starfaring races would be more advanced than us technologically and maybe even spiritually, they'd nevertheless exist in the natural category that we exist in. Granted, it's conceivable that some races might be entirely energetic or spiritual in nature. But I'm talking about what most people think of when they think of 'extraterrestrials':

intelligent beings that, at a bare minimum, possess a physical nature and essence.

"And so before performing miracles for us, perhaps God sends us the angels. But before sending even the angels, God may send beings that are similar to ourselves in nature. Again, these may be angel-like human beings from other planets. But they might also be non-human entities with the ability to shift completely out of physical form into an intangible manifestation.

"We'll always have the angels with us, but perhaps even they have the luxury of not having to act if physical beings stand ready to influence and guide us subtly and covertly, helping us to evolve in every way as we gradually learn how to avoid self-extinction. But their overarching purpose may be to protect us from threats beyond our ability to deal with. Yes, such threats would include those we create in our ignorance and depravity. But perhaps the most serious are the external threats.

In that case, our extraterrestrial guardians form a shield about us to protect us from indifferent, even malevolent forces. It's a shield of immense power, one formed by a number of very advanced races that desire to help humankind on Earth. Some may have this mandate from a higher authority. Some may have no such mandate but are motivated by altruism—or even love. Still others may be here out of a sense of stoic obligation.

"But we also have to consider the possibility that one or more civilizations believe that they can learn something from us. Superior life doesn't imply omniscience. No matter how evolved you may be, you can always gain a bit of new knowledge, even while studying creatures of relatively primitive intelligence.

"At least one source in the intelligence community says that a certain extraterrestrial race has been visiting Earth for about two thousand years. This time frame would place their arrival around the time of Christ. That's very interesting.

"One wonders whether this alien civilization foresaw, or was informed somehow, that the Creator would descend into

the physical universe in bodily form. Maybe they had reason to believe, by some word that had come to them, that God had never done so before and would never do so again—neither in this universe nor in any other. A uniquely unique opportunity.

"Their spiritual leaders pondered and prayed about this wonderful future event, possibly for very long ages. And they resolved, in the fullness of time, to visit the world where they might acquire the knowledge and wisdom handed down to us by *The Word*. And so they longed for the teachings given to a fallen race in desperate need of redemption and salvation.

"I've read that more than a single intelligent non-human race maintains a presence on Earth. Maybe they're all here to learn how to become that which their God wants them to be. *Collegium Terrae*. Yes, even *they* have room to grow. Because maybe spiritual growth is *eternal*.

"But regardless of their reasons are for being here, the existence of intelligent extraterrestrial life, even that of the very human variety, if it were to be officially disclosed, is something that would certainly change the world immensely. Some claim that people's faith in God would be tested, even shattered, in the event of disclosure. But how would *you* react, Father, if you were to encounter one or more of these beings, or if it were officially announced that they exist and are present on Earth? Would *you* lose faith?"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Slowly turning his face to Adam, Camillus met the eager eyes of his former pupil. “Before I proceed to answer your question, allow me to pose one of my own. Are the powers of the world suppressing proof of the existence of intelligent extraterrestrial life so that it doesn't become common knowledge that such life exists in abundance on other worlds in the cosmos? If so, I think the reason might be because they want us to believe that humans are the *only* intelligent race in existence. Maybe their agenda demands that they push the idea that we're a fluke of nature and not God's creation. A happy fortuity.

“Or they might be interested in advancing the idea that the existence of a Creator isn't necessary in order to explain our existence because a non-human race could've *unilaterally* formed the human species. But one or more 'creator races' and an infinite, eternal God aren't mutually exclusive realities. The existence of one doesn't belie the existence of the other. We could be the brainchild of such an extremely advanced race, and yet God would still be our Creator.

“In fact, I think races exist that are so old, and thus so advanced, that we'd be forced to think of them as gods—as ascendant life-forms. Maybe *Homo sapiens sapiens*—or at least our physical aspect—was designed and engineered by one of these races. In some science fiction circles, they might be categorized as one of the 'First Ones', billions of years older than the races visiting us in spaceships. I get the sense that, generally speaking, the extraterrestrial beings encountered by experiencers are relatively young.

“But some of the Ancients, at least the oldest of them, would in all likelihood have no use for physical craft. They'd be purely energetic or spiritual in nature, moving themselves from location to location by the power of thought alone. Technology

would be in no way necessary for their survival. But it seems that technology is something that our extraterrestrial visitors need. Although they might utilize thought to control their craft, they need physical vessels to get around.

"Anyway, in my opinion the disclosure of the existence of even one humanoid race other than ours would seriously *strengthen* the argument for a Creator. And the existence of a second humanoid race would add even more power to the argument. Imagine the disclosure of a large number of such species. This would make the Intelligent Design argument that much more powerful because, from my point of view, as the number of existent civilizations rises, the likelihood goes down that they're mere flukes of Nature. With enough flukes, you begin to question them as such.

"Now to answer your question, just because humanity was created in God's image, it doesn't imply that non-human races can't be created in that image also. Due to God's infinity, an infinite number of manifestations of the divine image can exist. Conceivably, therefore, an infinitude of life-forms could mirror God's being and nature, each in its own way.

"And so I can't understand the reason why some would lose faith in God. Why would faith in God hinge on whether extraterrestrials exist or not? The existence of extraterrestrial creatures isn't mutually exclusive with that of a Creator.

"Or maybe the issue isn't whether God can exist along with aliens, or even whether God can be a good God if aliens exist. Maybe it's a matter of how important or special we are in the universe. An identity crisis of sorts.

"But again, an infinite number of creatures can express God's image, each in its own unique way. In the possession of intelligence and free agency, these beings would manifest the divine nature in so many different ways. But that doesn't imply sanctity or holiness on their part. The entire collection of their thoughts, words and actions would determine their sanctity.

"And so creation in God's image doesn't imply inherent holiness. But let's return to the supposed loss of faith that would happen in an official disclosure of extraterrestrial life. Believers should consider that they *already* believe, without detriment to their belief in God or to their own importance and worth, in the existence of non-human beings that aren't of this world. We're talking about the good angels—but also the fallen angels—who have no bodies of their own. As John writes in his first epistle, '*We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one'*. The 'evil one' mentioned here has many names, but I'll speak none of them, because to say one's name is to do one honor.

"Now, a ruler—especially a non-physical one—requires physical servants to rule a physical world. Spiritual beings aren't able to do this from their spiritual abode. You'd need physical beings to assist and serve if you desire to rule over a physical realm like Earth. Therefore, human beings, or physical beings possessing the natural ability to *appear* human, knowingly serve the Evil One to keep this world in a dark place.

"The promise of great power or wealth—or both—might have secured their allegiance. But there are servants who don't realize that they're serving the Evil One. They ignorantly aid and abet the forces of darkness through vice: greed, lust, avarice, twisted or misguided worldviews, et cetera. But even so, the truly dangerous ones knowingly serve the wicked ruler of this world, and thus their purpose is sinister.

"The evil spirits themselves aren't of this world and they have no bodies to limit their actions. Therefore they're free to go anywhere in the cosmos. If, like you said Adam, God had created humanity on some other world, then it would've been subject to some sort of test in which evil played a part. But to pass such a test, one must choose between good and evil. But if evil has no presence, or at least the potential of emergence, then the choice can't be made.

"Thus, the evil spirits would've perceived or in some way sensed humanity on the planet it inhabited, however paradisial. And being drawn by the human presence, they would've arrived on such a world to do what they do best: make trouble, incite sin, stir up chaos and sow confusion. They take great delight in being agents of disorder and suffering.

"I can't help but believe that their nature has fallen so far that they're truly incapable of doing a single good thing. It's degenerated to the point where not an ember of good exists by which they can perform a single virtuous act. Their fire has been forever extinguished. Not a trace is left.

"But let's return to the thought that you can't rule a physical world without the help of physical beings. It's a good bet that if other worlds are home to human races, the Enemy will have helpers among the members of those groups as well. Even so, would such humans be their only servants? No.

"Some aid must come to the fallen spirits from human subjects, yes, but also from creatures of neither an angelic nor human origin. Because maybe the human element wouldn't be sufficient, therefore necessitating other help. Such assistance would include creatures designed and created by either the outcast spirits themselves, or by their servants on this or other worlds. It might sound perfectly outlandish that evil entities of an incorporeal nature could design and then produce servant-creatures either directly or indirectly. But hear me out.

"First, let's consider the term 'Sons of God' in the Bible. It could refer to the fallen angels, who received physical bodies and lowered themselves into our world and had their way with human women. Their semi-angelic offspring could've gone on to engineer physical slaves to serve their fathers, the Sons of God.

"Another possibility is that in some bygone age demonic possession, in controlled circumstances, was such that the evil spirit had perfect control over the human body. This would give the evil entity, through the possessed brain, unhindered thought

and reasoning. Therefore it could pursue its goals via science, technology and engineering. Could it be that in ancient times our physical, mental and spiritual constitutions were such that they allowed for such perfect possession? Or was total and perfect possession possible because the demons hadn't fallen so far from their original nature as to make it impossible?

"In my opinion, the first possibility is more likely. That the children of the Sons of God were born into wickedness, or turned to it later, and thereafter designed and produced highly intelligent, biological servants who then evolved and advanced in many ways. The servants' capacity for independent thought enabled them to adapt and change according to the times, advancing from one technological level to the next.

"We might imagine a gray-skinned humanoid creature with large black eyes, designed and made as an automaton, and having the scientific and engineering aptitude to serve some dark agenda. It may have the ability to replicate itself. But the world's evil powers—both human and non-human—could manufacture new units as needed, all through science and technology.

"I use the term 'automaton' because, according to my understanding, the scientists who studied the dead occupants of the downed Roswell craft found that they were artificial. They were engineered. They weren't products of Nature.

"But the Roswell creatures might not be the creations of an evil power. They might be the servants of some explorer race. Or the scientists could be wrong. That opens the door to the possibility that the Roswell creatures *are* products of Nature or even direct creations of God. Anyway, I truly believe that intelligent, biological automatons exist, and that they possess advanced technology, and that they were made by someone or something higher than themselves on the scale of creation.

"We can even go out on a limb here and speculate that these intelligent biological machines are merely vessels for the

indwelling of ethereal beings. We read in Mark 5:12 about the evil spirits, who beg Christ, saying, '*Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them*'. This passage points to the truth that spirits can possess animals. And since they can also possess human beings, it's not so unreasonable to consider that they might be able to possess *any* biological body.

"And so whether or not the Roswell 'biologics' were, in fact, designed and made by negative, bodiless intelligences, it's quite conceivable that the latter *could've* engineered artificial servants in many ways similar to the Roswell life-forms. Such entities would allow the demons to operate in the physical world on a higher level than they could otherwise. There may exist a biological machine that possesses very great intelligence and made so that its mind and consciousness could function both autonomously *and* in unison with an occupant of an incorporeal nature, regardless of whether the occupant is basically good or evil. Such an indweller, whatever nature it may possess, might be thought of as a 'ghost in the machine'. Now imagine a great variety of these mass-produced machines."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The notion of incorporeal beings with the ability to dwell within animal bodies, or to engineer biological bodies for themselves, moved Adam to consider the idea that humanity was made by a race of godlike creatures. Even though such beings couldn't have created the soul, which is a person's immortal essence, they might've engineered the body by themselves—or through physical servants. Adam motioned that he wanted to speak.

"Hold on just a minute, Father. You have me thinking. What if advanced extraterrestrials created the human being? I know that you don't like the idea of a 'creator race', but what if we *are* the product of such a race? If so, then we can only say that God created us indirectly. But then we couldn't really call God our 'Creator', at least not in a literal sense.

Father Camillus couldn't help but be amused. "Do you remember what you said earlier, Adam? That if we're going to become God's co-creators, it would amount to, among other things, roles as cosmic architects? It's the idea of something created and the stuff of which it's made, both ideas existing in the mind of the thinker before they exist in any other mind, that makes an individual a stand-alone creator. In order to perform an act of creation as a *sole* creator, you must first possess in your mind the complete idea of your creation before anything or anyone else does.

"Otherwise, you're merely a co-creator, because even though you're acting on ideas which sprang forth within your mind, those ideas first existed in the Uncreated Mind *from all eternity*. You're the architect, but so is God. That's co-creation.

"And if you're playing with matter that already exists, you're only tweaking the information within it to produce the

desired result. If you're modifying or enhancing existing matter through genetic manipulation, so what? That doesn't make one a creator. An artist or an engineer, yes. But not a true *creator*.

"Were they present at the beginning—your gods, your extraterrestrial progenitors—when space and matter and time were made? As a mere idea, did the human being exist in their minds before it existed in the mind of that ultimate Power and Intelligence that created all things? At most, they can say that they're co-creators of the human race. But even *that* would be questionable, at least in the minds of most human beings.

"I think it's very possible that we evolved out of a lower form of life. But I also think that a superior intelligence could've engineered the physical part of our twofold nature through the tweaking or combining of genetic material. However, even if an intelligent alien race *formed* us physically, it's not creation—unless the idea of the human being existed in its mind before it existed in any other mind. In forming us, it might've served as the hands of the Divine Sculptor. But formation isn't creation.

"The idea of the human being was in God's mind as an eternal thought, existing outside the temporal existence of any supposed progenitors. The very concept of the 'creator gods' themselves, if they exist, would have existed from all eternity in the Mind of God, as would the knowledge that they'd give form to the human race in the fullness of time. The omniscience of God would've foreseen their accomplishment before they even came into existence. We might call them 'the Hands of God', but not our creators. That's why I hate the term 'creator race'.

"Ultimately, however, even after having considered that there's some evidence to support the idea, all we can really do is speculate about the existence of a progenitor race. And we should differentiate between God's direct creations and what Nature or intelligent creatures might be capable of producing. Whatever formed or created *them*, the extraterrestrials who are visiting Earth aren't malevolent or evil, except for maybe some

individuals or groups among them. For the most part, they're not here to destroy us.

"How can we know that? Because if they were here to erase us, we would've been gone long ago. These beings do have the technology to swiftly bring about our extinction. But if they do, in fact, desire our annihilation, what are they waiting for? A formal invitation from our glorious leaders? Supposedly, they've been visiting us for a minimum of seventy-five years—since the late Forties. Even if this extremely conservative time frame is right, it would be more than enough time to make a move. And yet here we are. *Alive*.

"One could easily argue that they intend to manipulate us—or to corrupt us to some evil end. Possibly, they could be morally neutral, even while their actions don't objectively agree with God's plan. Again, they could know nothing about good and evil, and are therefore innocent in that sense. But does that mean that every last extraterrestrial person is incapable of even a single objective wrong? I don't think so. Remember that Adam and Eve sinned even in their innocence.

"I can't quite bring myself to believe that each and every creature within all the God-created or Nature-formed species is absolutely perfect in terms of having never done any objective wrong. I think we can safely say that, collectively at least, they're not malevolent or ill-intentioned. But this probably doesn't hold true for many extraterrestrial individuals or subsets. Otherwise we're dealing with races of angels—a remote possibility.

"Perhaps all non-human races created by God, either directly or via Nature, and which possess the ability to travel to or otherwise visit our planet, and every last individual within all such races, are by nature incapable of committing objective wrongs in their innocence. But that seems like a long shot to me. Whatever the truth may be, I believe that, at a minimum, the majority of beings visiting our world are naturally good, or at least morally neutral.

"But as I said before, in my opinion, artificial, biological automatons may exist that are either evil in themselves or in the service of some evil power. Because they have something to hide, these entities do their best to stay hidden at all times, unlike the God-created or Nature-formed extraterrestrials who *have* in actuality appeared to experiencers in brief encounters, intentionally dropping subtle hints of their existence here and there. In contrast, we've been made aware of the existence of the artificial automatons only because a number of stories, reports and government documents have been published that provide the details of crash retrievals and black operations, together with medical procedures performed on the beings.

"Again, these servants possess advanced technologies that they employ in the pursuit of some agenda, be it good or evil. Basically, they're intelligent biological automatons, possibly able to serve as vessels of indwelling. Whatever they are, they're tools for a higher power."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Camillus rose from his rocking chair and went to the window. Not a cloud was in the sky, and the garden was teeming with life. With his hands behind his back, he went on. “But let's forget for a moment about the tools that the evil powers are using, and let's talk instead about what they're *really* after. Their intent is to cause maximum confusion, suffering and death everywhere in the universe. But what they desire more than anything, but shall never actually get, is to see all of creation destroyed: the ending of everything, including their own existence.

“Of course God knows that they can never bring such a reality about themselves. God holds all things in being, and nothing can fall out of existence without God’s willing it. But God doesn't make mistakes. The Almighty doesn't bring things into being only to release them into non-existence later. Non-existence is anathema to the infinite nature and essence of the One who is Absolute Existence. However, it doesn't mean that the evil spirits accept this truth. Their individual and collective minds, twisted in their fall, are prone to delusion.”

Adam failed to comprehend exactly what Camillus was saying. “And what if the evil powers succeeded in provoking a global nuclear war? Wouldn't that get them what they're after: the total annihilation of our race?”

“Adam, it's vital that you understand that the Evil One wants total and complete annihilation of both matter and spirit. Up to and including the Creator, as if that were a possibility. All things and everything. All physical things, all spiritual things and all things that are both matter and spirit. In a word, the whole of this universe and any others that may exist. That's what they'd have if they could have it. They'd *uncreate* the entire

multiverse, if, in fact, such an immense system exists. They'd *unmake* Heaven and Earth.

"Some of the lesser powers may not be so wicked as to desire this ending of reality. But at a minimum, the Father of Death desires it. You can be assured of that. The Enemy of the world wants to be the sole object of worship, but that doesn't preclude an even greater desire that everything be unmade. The two aren't mutually exclusive.

"This ancient, intangible creature is the epitome of evil. And yet it seems that some individuals aren't so convinced of this fact. Only a few days ago, I watched a rather interesting interview. The interviewee asserted that God creates evil, and based such belief on a certain verse in the Bible. He quoted Isaiah 45:7, in which God says, '*I make peace and create evil*'.

"But this Bible verse requires interpretation. And with all possible respect to the interviewee, his interpretation is flat wrong. To 'create evil' means that when God acts on the world or issues commandments for us to live by, the actions and the laws compel us to either accept them or reject them. And out of these decisions, evil emerges.

"Simply put, God's demands elicit responses one way or the other, resulting in polarization. In this polarization, good and evil arise. Therein, we have the 'creation' of good and evil. And so we shouldn't interpret literally the words of Isaiah about God creating evil, because the Creator only makes it *possible* for creatures to choose evil. And they do so via their response to God. God creates the creature, who then creates evil.

"Sin is defined as a total separation between God and creature. An abyss if you will. If God committed sin, God would be separated from God, creating a rift in the divine substance itself. Stated in other words, if God committed evil, two separate divine substances would exist, but with a chasm between them. But God is absolutely simple in nature. *Indivisible*. Thus, only a creature can 'create evil', and thereby be divided from God.

"One could easily say that evil exists in Nature. Thorns and mosquitoes, for example. Would a good God create such things? One is the cause of excruciating pain and the other robs us of blood, leaving an irritating itch. The thorn can puncture the skin, leading to an infection. And the mosquito is often a vector for disease-causing pathogens. Could these be the creations of a good God? Did God 'create evil' by creating them?

"We're obligated to defend God's goodness and attempt to sway those who would say that God causes evil. The truth is that the whole of Creation changed after the Fall. Nature was diminished. Thorns, thistles and weeds rose up out of the earth after the ruination of the Garden by Original Sin.

"And if thorns were among the fruits of the first sin, why not the mosquito also? Or could such a creature be the work of those 'Sons of God' in the Bible? Or of another ancient power?

"Whatever we may think, God is absolutely good. No evil comes from the Divine Essence. Saint John's first letter attests:

> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and declare unto you: that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness.

"If there's no darkness in God, then neither is there any evil, because in this context 'darkness' is a metaphor for 'evil'. And if there's no evil in God, then God can't *cause* any evil, because God's nature is immutable. In other words, the divine essence is incapable of going from a state in which it never has caused evil to one that has.

"But on the other hand, the ruler of the world, who is paradoxically the enemy of the world, *is* the original source of evil. Beginning with this vile creature, the lesser angels also fell from their high places in the heavenly spheres. Isn't it written that a third of them fell?

"And as I said earlier, the Evil One is hell-bent on the annihilation of God and of all that God has made. And many of the Enemy's inferiors desire this, too. But I suspect that a sizable element within the demonic ranks isn't really looking for the annihilation of all things, only because it would rather have all creatures suffer endlessly.

"One might propose that the denizens of the infernal regions are evenly divided down the middle. They disagree on what the greater evil is: the annihilation of all beings, or the eternal suffering of the same. These are two mutually exclusive realities. You can't have one if you have the other.

"You might question why a large number of the evil spirits would desire the cessation of their own existence. It's because they hate everything, including themselves. They wish that they'd never been created. If even a human being is capable of suicide, think of what a demon is capable of. It would seek the end of its existence and that of all others. A malevolent spirit's self-hatred would seek to pull everything else down with it.

"The Creator gives existence to creatures so that they can then accept or reject their existence. One can't say 'yes' to existence without possessing it first. But the Creator would never annul a creature's being.

"And so in lieu of a return to non-existence, the Creator allows creatures to choose eternal isolation and misery. That's what the demons have chosen. It's just that they haven't been banished yet. If they were now living in their eternal exile, we'd know it, because the world wouldn't be so dark.

"In any case, its necessary for God to impart existence before a creature is able to exercise its free will regarding that creative act. If the creature answers with 'no', then it's free to choose that which is almost as bad as actual non-existence—eternal desolation and unhappiness. It's a real choice, and we all have to make it.

"But after bringing them into being, God doesn't initially bestow on intelligent beings the ability to behold the Divine Essence. To see the face of God—what theologians call 'the Beatific Vision'—is to be drawn inexorably to the divine object of the vision, without being able to choose otherwise, because divine beauty is unlimited and no creature would be able to resist it. And so to see God directly is to give up the ability to place any creature above God in one's heart. Thus, God gives creatures existence initially without the Beatific Vision. In this way, they're able to freely choose to either reject or embrace their Creator. But I digress.

"The demons have already made their decision. Like us, they began without the vision of God's face, and so they were able to choose between good and evil. They chose the latter.

"I'm eternally grateful that the evil powers will never be able to get what they truly want. The universe isn't destined to return to a state of non-existence. On the contrary, the future is forever! Untold wonders await us!"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

His faith in Creation's eternally bright future notwithstanding, Adam moped as he stared emptily at the floor. After a good bit of prodding from Camillus, he spoke. “Sure, it's great that the demons will never get what they're really after. But the thought of what they'd do to their Creator cuts me right to the heart. If it were possible, they'd erase from existence the very One who gave them the gifts of being and life—the One who bestowed on them the ability to find happiness and to live within it.

“Those who refuse to believe that the soul continues to exist beyond death *believe* in what perhaps half of the demons *want*, and that is a state of non-existence after life. It's not that the unbelievers are evil. It's just that they hold to a notion that's metaphysically dark and terrible. We can never prove to the doubters that death is only a transformation into another form. Proof is impossible. What's more, any efforts to convince them on the basis of faith would require extraordinary divine grace.”

“We could ask them if they believe in life after life.”

“Uh...what? You mean life after death...right?”

“No, I mean life after life.”

Adam shook his head. “I don't understand.”

“The idea is to get them to think about what they were before conception, what they are now, and what they're going to be after death. We didn't exist before conception. And yet we came into being. We were not, and yet now we are. Now we are living beings, alive and able to think, laugh and love. But after we die, what shall we be, Adam?”

"Um, we'll be pure spirit. At least for a time."

"Right, but the unbeliever doesn't believe that."

"That's right."

"So he or she will say that we return to nothingness."

"Correct."

"Then let's assume their belief that, because there's no soul, the individual returns to non-existence, at least in terms of sentience. Ask them this, 'If some power or force brought us into existence from non-existence once, what prevents that same power or force from doing so again?' It's important that the unbelievers know that we're assuming their belief.

"We're trying to show them that this great Mystery that brought them out of a state of nothingness the first time can do so a second time—and any number of times. They might say, 'One existence doesn't imply a second'. If they say this, ask them how long they were in the non-existent state before they came to be, and more than likely they'll say that it was an eternity because time can only exist for actual beings."

"What are you trying to say, Father?"

"I'm trying to say that according to how I imagine they'd see it, their non-existent state wasn't a temporal reality. Thus, it had no duration of time. And so in effect, they were in a non-existent state for an eternity. What makes them think that their entering a second eternity of non-existence, identical to the first, would fail to bring each of them into existence again? It's absolutely inevitable, because no matter how long they might remain in the non-existent state, the conditions that ushered in

their initial existence will surface again. Because the conditions would have an eternity to arise—be it in this universe or another. And so we can propose the following principle: that if nothing lasts forever, and if the existence of a creature can't last forever, then its non-existence can't last forever, either. I'm reminded of a passage from the Book of Chuang-Tzu. It's a translation by Lin Yutang:

> "Not at all," said the Spirit of the Ocean. "Dimensions are limitless; time is endless. Conditions are not constant; terms are not final. Thus, the wise man looks into space, and does not regard the small as too little, nor the great as too much; for he knows that there is no limit to dimensions. He looks back into the past, and does not grieve over what is far off, nor rejoice over what is near; for he knows that time is endless. He investigates fullness and decay, and does not rejoice if he succeeds, nor lament if he fails; for he knows that conditions are not constant. He who clearly apprehends the scheme of existence does not rejoice over life, nor repine at death; for he knows that terms are not final."

"Whichever way we carve the block, we have no final end, whether one holds to the belief that the soul ceases to be at death or that it continues on. Eternity is a long time, and even if by some dark miracle creatures can return to non-existence, God can and will bring them back into being—somewhere and somewhen—in this universe or another. We should always remember the words of the Lord in Revelation, '*Behold, I make all things new*'. These most profound words should elicit in us unsurpassed wonder, indelible confidence and a peace no one can take away."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Adam briefly thought about Camillus's idea of "life after life." And it seemed to him that even believers oftentimes doubt that they'll exist after death. And so we place an exceedingly great value on our lives, things to be preserved at all costs, so that we flee from death with unlimited dread. Thus, when those we love are called back home—to an unimaginably higher, Elysian existence—we often resent God for it.

It seems to be in our human nature to question God's goodness when more of our loved ones pass away. Perhaps we question that goodness even more so when confronted with mass murders, genocide and even global extinctions. The question arises: "Is God still a good God in a world that has endured more than its fair share of death and decay?" Adam's faith was a solid one. But he wanted Camillus to reconcile the goodness of God with the reality of the many evils in our lives, especially death.

"I see what you're saying, but I have a question. I think God's actions need an explanation, at least for those whose faith requires one. If God is good, why destroy entire cities—even for the gravest of sins? Why allow comets and asteroids to wipe out most of the life on this planet? Why did the One who made all life allow so much of it to perish in the Flood?

"I can believe that part of the world had become sinful beyond redemption. Even the whole of it. But for God to destroy most living things, or even just to allow that destruction, is a test of faith for many. How do we even begin..."

Camillus cleared his throat to interrupt. "Try to think as God does. Try to remember what you said earlier, that God can appear to a vast number of souls in a single moment to save

them all. Imagine that the world is full of sinners, and that their ungodliness and moral depravity are very great. Not every last person is lost in a spiritual sense, but by and large, Earth's civilizations have become depraved. Spiritually speaking, the world as a whole is long gone. *It's dead*. A life of virtue has never been eschewed by so many.

"But you're God. And you know full well that you're the only one who can move them all to complete conversion. Even so, you know that after they turn around to the good, it won't take them so long to fall again into complete moral dissolution. You see the future as clearly as you see the present and the past. And therefore you know that they'll fail to *remain* faithful, even if they should be converted back to the light.

"And so you reach out your omnipotent hand, and you take their lives in a great cataclysm of global scale. And being God, you appear to each of them in the moment before death. You work a great miracle in their hearts in the blink of an eye, saving every last one of them before the world's end.

"The great many who die are perfectly converted just before their souls exit their bodies. Thus they're saved forever. God's saving action effects a radical change in them, elevating them into an unending, perfectly happy life. A felicity so good that the very idea of returning to their earthly existence could never coalesce in their minds for the loathsomeness.

"If the cataclysm hadn't taken them all, their depravity would've grown and advanced to the point where, on a certain level, even God wouldn't have been able to move their hearts to conversion. But given God's supernatural and extraordinary grace, and after having died in a worldwide disaster, every last one of their souls rises upward. Into an impossible happiness.

"It's not that easy to believe in something like this. The human mind can't readily accept that God can take a global population in an apocalypse and give every man, woman and child therein a life that can't possibly be happier. But we never

look at *that* half of the equation. All we see is that they died. With faith the size of a mustard seed, one could believe that all of history's cataclysm victims have been saved. And it would be truly so."

Believing in the salvation of everyone who'd ever live in the world during his life, Adam had no issue with the idea that God could save all who'd perish in a global calamity. "Obviously, I believe that God can work a miracle of such magnitude. Otherwise I wouldn't hold the Dream so dear.

"If God has saved those who've died in such an event, then they're enjoying their lives in Heaven even as we speak, unless some are still undergoing purification, which is highly unlikely. But when I think of global cataclysms and the people who died in them, I can't help but think of the gods of old. So I wonder: Were the gods of ancient times just human persons who somehow rose into a supernatural state while they lived? And if so, wouldn't godhood be possible in *this* life for all who live in *this* age of the world?"

Camillus was quick to answer. "I think that it's possible. But some of the theological and spiritual intelligentsia go even further. One school seems to allow that Christian deification, at least in part, is possible in this life. Others might even allow for it's full realization. Among the latter, some might claim that, in this life, deification can be lost once attained, while others might hold that it *can't* be lost. As for me, I don't hold a firm position on these questions. But even if we can't now possess deification outright, I think that we can lay the foundation.

"If we live in the truth and abide in it, we're sure to wind up in the divinized state, whether in this life or the next. But we have to be very careful here. Christian godhood—what we call 'deification'—is a species of godhood distinct from the form of godhood I believe you're referring to.

"Because deification, as conceived by the Faithful, is defined as the creature becoming one with Unlimited Being. A creature can be a supernatural being—a 'god'—without being oned with Infinite Being. Infinite Being *is* a supernatural being, but not every supernatural being is Infinite Being or oned with it.

"The gods of the Greeks and other cultures, according to the best of my knowledge, possessed abilities far above our own. And so they were 'supernatural beings'. But such beings possessed *finite* natures. Again, to the best of my knowledge, the Greeks didn't see their deities as infinite beings.

"But I can't help but wonder: Did evil gods exist? Or at least immoral ones? Maybe some of them only *appeared* to be evil in the eyes of mortal men and women. But if one or more gods were objectively evil, it wasn't because their God made them that way. Just as the First Creature rebelled against its Creator, so some of the gods might've revolted.

"As for us, the godhood we aspire to transcends the nature of any of those who filled the ancient pantheons of the world. In fact, to ascend into the deified state is to share in the life of Infinite Being. It's a participation in God's unlimited life.

"Now to answer your first question, Adam...I'd say that the gods of old could've been human before they experienced some kind of apotheosis. Or they could've been born that way. Or they could've been advanced, evolved human beings from other worlds—'extraterrestrial human beings', one might say. It could even be that they were a race created by God—neither human in nature nor angelic nor extraterrestrial—but having Earth as their home. Anything's possible.

"Anyhow, gods in some form existed in ancient times. And I believe that they exist even *now*, along with the One True God. The two aren't mutually exclusive.

"Modern Christians are inclined to believe that, since at least the advent of the true Faith, the gods haven't existed. I think we're wrong to think like that. God can make gods out of

lower life-forms. Or out of stones for that matter. At any time in history, in any place that God desires and for whatever reason. The Creator's divine nature has no limits and is thus impeded by no obstacles.

"The existence of such lofty, elevated creatures doesn't preclude the existence of a supreme and infinite Deity—and vice versa. Many in the world think that you can either believe in one infinite God or in a plethora of finite gods. Not both.

"There's no dichotomy. We should always keep in mind the divine title, 'Most High God'. It implies that lesser gods exist. Think of the psalmic words, '*Ye are gods*'. If humans are gods, we can't be the only ones! Gods higher than ourselves are out there somewhere. But like us, they're infinitely lower than the Almighty. And so we shouldn't worship them, at least not with the worship due to the Creator alone.

"Some of those who reject monotheism worship one or more of the gods within some pantheon. They don't believe in a single Supreme Being. But the truth points to itself. The Truth pointed to itself when it said, '*I am the Truth*'. No one except Christ has ever uttered those words. No guru, no prophet, no spiritual leader, no angel, no saint, no god—no creature.

"If anyone other than Christ Jesus—the one who first appropriated this title—should claim it, we'll know them to be false. Some may dare to try. Woe to them should they do so."

For the sake of argument, Adam played the doubter. "But Father, nothing can stop me from saying, 'I am the Truth'. In fact, I just said it. That in itself doesn't make me the Truth. So what if Christ uttered those words?"

"Okay, Mr. Devil's Advocate. Did you say it just to shoot down my argument, or did you really mean what you said? Do you actually believe that you're the Truth? We both know the answer to that question.

"And so you uttered the words, but they were empty. If you had truly meant them, believing with all of your heart that they were true, and if they were, in fact, true from an objective standpoint, then you would've uttered the words not only in *my* presence. You would've also gone out and spread this news far and wide throughout the world.

"And since every truth eventually surfaces, somewhere along the line someone would've put it in writing that Adam is the Truth. But alas, nobody's done that." Adam just smiled and shook his head, unable to outmaneuver Camillus.

"No, you're not the Truth. Nor is any creature. Not even the gods of old. And yet they exist, Adam. But they don't wield lightning bolts or tridents. They don't wear leaved crowns. But they do have great mental, spiritual and technological abilities.

"They may have departed from our world, at least in so far as we can perceive. But they're real. They're either still here on Earth, but in a subtle and covert fashion, or they've moved on to greener pastures elsewhere in the universe.

"But again, we shouldn't worship them—not with *latria*, the love that's due solely to God. The bottom line is that they're creatures, the same as we are. No matter how superior they may be, they're finite beings like us. The same goes for beings from other planets—or from other times and universes. Reality consists of a virtual infinitude of creatures, and we should love none of them more than the One who made us all."

"Yes Father, but if like us these gods are called by their Creator to enjoy deified lives, and given that they're *already* superior to us, wouldn't they retain their superiority even after we and they have ascended into the divinized state?"

"Not necessarily. Whatever the truth may be, everyone in Heaven will be happy. And so one's position or standing in

the celestial hierarchies doesn't matter in a very real way. If you're one of the highest creatures in Heaven, then most spirits positioned below you are dim in your sight, especially compared to God. When you look down, all of the lights below you are faint compared to you and the Maker of All.

"But if you're at or near the bottom, you look up and the lights are almost impossibly vivid. Every spirit is glorious, majestic and a wonder for the spiritual eyes to behold. God and the entirety of Heaven are an awesome sight to see.

"It's possible that such vantages will mean nothing to the individual beholder since, in a way, the vision of God will blind one to even the most glorious creatures. Still, here's a great mystery for you: Every inhabitant of the New Heaven will be necessary to the eternal bliss of all other inhabitants. Even though God is all we need for our eternal happiness in terms of absolute truth, no saint, angel or celestial being will be superfluous to the heavenly life."

Adam couldn't grasp what Father Camillus was trying to get across. "Well, if gods exist, then they're certainly more powerful than we are. At a minimum, they're spiritually superior to us. And even if they can brag about that fact, they'd never actually do so. We can say the same about our extraterrestrial visitors in terms of their technological status."

"Adam, power and ability are no big deal. To possess power is to possess that which makes it easy to do whatever such power is actually able to do. In other words, it's easy to exert various kinds of influence and control over others if you possess the power to do so. It's not so easy if you don't.

"Even God knows that the only one who can rightfully boast about anything at all is the one who can do something without possessing the power or ability to do it. And that's no one! Who can perform an action without the ability to do it?

"Go and work wonders without the ability to do them! That's greatness beyond even that of God. When you're able to do something, it's no surprise at all when you do it. And if you can lift *x* pounds but not *x + 1*, why brag about *x*?

"Think of it this way. If I'm able to create beings out of nothing, even then I can't boast because such greatness stems from the fulfillment of a condition. The condition is that either I naturally possess or acquire by some endeavor the ability to impart existence to non-existent things. Greatness that infinitely transcends the infinite lies in bringing something into existence without possessing the *ability* to do such a thing. Such power is absolutely impossible, transcending even omnipotence.

"You might argue that such metaphysical potency and potential is a chimera—that it can't exist. And you'd be right. That's exactly why God doesn't boast of the infinite power to create. Because even the Almighty is unable to bring things into existence without *first* having that power and ability.

"The same is true of the gods' abilities, most of whom aren't of this world. Some of them must realize and understand exactly what I'm talking about here. Because I've never heard them proclaim, 'Who is great like us? We're higher life-forms, advanced in every way.' Pride and boasting are for fools. It's in loving others that one achieves true greatness.

"The power-hungry should ask themselves, 'What is real power?' Infinite potential inheres in nothingness. The truth is that in possessing no power one possesses infinite power. Zero is equal to infinity. How so? Because zero is measureless, just as infinity is measureless. Thus, zero and infinity are one and the same. Zero is infinity couched in the form of a number.

"But within even the weakest creature of God, or the most infinitesimal, there exists some finite measure of power. Having zero power doesn't naturally belong to created things. And so it is that no creature possesses infinite ability. If one could become nothing, one could become *everything*.

"The modern seeker should strive for exactly that: to become God on a mystical level. Is it any wonder that God, who became a child and endured a life of thirty years or so, humbled himself and sought to be as nothing before men? It's true what Saint Paul wrote about himself—that when he was weak, then he was strong. And if you take that principle to its logical extreme, you could say that one's strength is unlimited when one is nothing at all. Zero strength is infinite strength.

"Nowadays, people desire money and power, among other things. They're not interested in becoming the infinity of nothing. Instead, they seek a finite measure of power or money that surpasses all others. They hunger for the best and the greatest, from money to fame to influence and everything in between. And with all these things, they think they'll be happy.

"But this isn't the way of a soul serious about getting to God. Instead of seeking worldly gain, the global elite and the rulers of the world should be going in the opposite direction—towards zero. They're going in the wrong direction. The further they go, the more they fall behind.

"Is there a choice between the finite and the infinite? Is there a choice between a finitude of possessions and abilities, however great they might become, and unlimited possessions and abilities? How can there really be a choice? There's really no choice, because who would choose the lesser of the two?

"Who would choose limited power, limited possessions and limited ability—even if they become immense—over *infinite* power, *infinite* possession and *infinite* ability? Only those who'd shortchange themselves. As for us, we should seek to become nothing so that we can become everything. Let's forsake all that can be measured so that we can become the Immeasurable.

"To become nothing is the secret of humility. To humble oneself before God is to realize that, in relative terms, one is nothing compared to God. A finite thing is nothing compared to an infinite thing.

"As creatures, each of us is but a finite *something* in absolute terms. However, the Creator is infinite in nature. And so we're nothing compared to God. In a very real sense, we become nothing—and therefore infinite—when we unite with God fully and perfectly, as it shall be in the life to come.

"Oned with God, a finite thing becomes an infinite thing and thus the 'nothing' and the 'zero' it couldn't be before. The creature, limited by its very nature, can transcend all real limits and all possible limits only when it wholly clothes itself in the nature of Unlimited Being. The virtue of humility realizes this.

"But that's the real challenge, isn't it? In no way is it easy to realize the pinnacle of humility. To be nothing in the mind and heart so that one's subjective awareness and consciousness align perfectly with the truth that, compared to God, even the highest creature is a sliver of non-existence. When we orient our lives towards this unspeakable reality, sooner or later we unite with God, shedding the finite skin of our earthly nature. In doing so, we enter a mystical state of existence in which we become the nothing, the zero and the infinite—divine in ways we'll never be able to see on this side of the veil."

“But this leads me back to our otherworldly watchers. What do they know about God? What is their relationship to the infinite Creator? Their technology and perhaps their natural abilities are far beyond our own. But what is the state of their spiritual lives? Do they occupy a higher spiritual level?

“I wonder whether they're losing out on an opportunity to grow in spiritual terms so long as they spend so much time monitoring and observing us. If they would just turn inward and minimize their time on us, they'd be that much more spiritually advanced. At least, this might be true for those extraterrestrial races that don't have a mandate from on high to guide other races. I think that there's a very good reason why some races haven't been given this blessing, and it's because their spiritual state would suffer in proportion to the time they'd spend on us.

“I think that some of the races with a presence on our world *do* have the mandate. But that's only some. Those that don't have it are here for selfish purposes—for reasons that don't align with God's plans. Perhaps this is why some people have encounters that can be described as mostly traumatic, even dark in nature. Our interactions with such beings result in mostly negative effects.

“And then there are races that have been sent our way with the blessing of the Creator. Experiences with them might be terrifying at first. But experiencers eventually arrive at the realization that they're friendly and mean no harm.

“The experiencers grow comfortable with their presence, but slowly at first. Perhaps those civilizations on official business can interact with us without losing anything spiritually, because they've already been tested. They've demonstrated that they can leave the cradle and go to the stars to shepherd younger races without negatively affecting those races. Or themselves.

"Maybe they've reached the pinnacle of the spiritual life. And so they lose nothing in observing and interacting with us. Perhaps not. Maybe in being here with us they're sacrificing so much, because it means less time and resources spent on the advancement and evolution of their own kind.

"Perhaps for some reason they had to choose between stewardship over younger races and a quicker evolution made possible by minding their business. And *only* their business. And it could be that certain individuals from various races, or castes within various races, involved themselves with us while most alien peoples stayed behind for their own betterment.

"Anyhow, maybe our otherworldly friends know that we can reach new spiritual highs if we would just fix our gaze on the Creator, not Creation. Maybe they remain hidden, at least primarily, because they don't want to further divert our fickle attention away from God and a good spiritual life, knowing the human being's proclivity for obsessing about the wonders and the mysteries of Nature. The otherworldliness of the visitors would only stoke this tendency.

"Like a child and the closed box, we want to peer into the extraterrestrial enigma. But if the box were to be opened, imagine the obsession we'd have with these beings and their technology—and everything else about them. This would take us further from that balance of spirituality and technology—of God and earthly life—that we so desperately need.

"If extraterrestrials openly revealed themselves in some public appearance, I think that the worship due to God would diminish. Because I think some individuals would worship them as gods. But, for the vast majority of people, the real danger wouldn't consist of a false adoration, but of a participation in a global mania centered around the otherworlders.

"The human race suffers now—and has suffered since its earliest days—from crazes which originate in the world of the mundane. How are we going to react when we get our hands

on alien beings and their technology, both of which are literally not of this world? Too many things in our lives already divert our attention away from God. Many of these come in the form of trinkets, toys, technologies and technological amusements. But on the whole, such diversions would never be able to capture our vacillating attention nearly so much as the open and public appearance of, and subsequent interaction with, an advanced race of intelligent beings of whatever nature and origin.

"Some have proposed that the gods of ancient times were extraterrestrial in origin. And so if some alien beings of a certain kind *were* the gods of yore, maybe in our day and age they've decided to use high technology for transportation. You might wonder at this. Because if I'm not mistaken, the gods descended to the earth and ascended to the sky by their own power. So why would they now utilize 'flying machines' to get around? Perhaps for our psychological benefit.

"If we were to behold them as ancient humanity did—as beings that can fly—we'd be overwhelmed. *Shocked*. We'd compare ourselves to them, and thereby suffer some sort of inferiority complex. At any rate, I imagine that our reaction in witnessing the gods' supernatural agility would be much more intense than it would be in seeing them utilizing physical craft.

"I believe that some humans would go much too far, placing their own kind below the gods and worshiping them. But I think most of the gods wouldn't want that. And I think that ancient humans erred in worshiping them. They were neither meant to be worshiped, nor did most of them want it. But the public display of their power had a world-changing effect on our ancestors, and so we fell into the error of false worship.

"But even if *some* extraterrestrial beings were the gods of old, sometimes revealing their presence in or around 'flying saucers' to mitigate the impact on our psyche, it still wouldn't be a good idea, in my opinion, for us to interact with them. At least not yet. We'd have to advance a very great deal in spiritual

terms before they could make a public appearance somewhere on Earth without negative effect. We're simply not ready for that yet. Especially not cohabitation.

"It's not that most folks would suddenly stop believing in God, although perhaps some might. It's that their attention, both short-term and long-term, would drift further away from the Creator. The initial shock and awe would eventually give way to the undying fascination and enchantment of a long-term fixation on all things extraterrestrial.

"And this wouldn't bode well for the worship of God. That is, unless the visitors could reveal themselves and live with us in a way that wouldn't detract from Priority One. And they could do so by driving home the fact that the worship of the Creator ranks above all other matters and concerns, and that nature will compel us to forsake even the most godlike technology when we attain a certain spiritual evolution.

"They must know that we're in an age of our existence in which technology consumes all of our attention, and that we almost worship that technology. Although it's necessary for our future survival, we've gone overboard in our interior disposition towards it. Perhaps, therefore, our visitors hesitate to openly involve themselves with us—so that we won't fix our gaze on *their* technology, thereby worshiping it and thus compounding the error.

"And so in general, we're not ready for the disclosure of their existence in a public appearance on the global stage, and we're certainly not ready to cohabit with them. Still, you'll never see me working against a public appearance—or even against cohabitation. I may disagree with those ideas, but that doesn't mean that I'll actively oppose their realization.

"If God wants them to happen, they will. But assuming these things have no place in God's plans, whereas the human and alien powers want to run with them...even in such a case, God won't prevent them, but will turn them into some greater

good that outweighs the ill effects. Anyhow, I'll live my life as if I held a neutral position on the matter, observing events as they unfold.

"However this little drama plays out, I think we have to be extremely careful about how we proceed here. Something tells me we're on the cusp of a major development. Depending on the path we decide on, we could be in for serious trouble. Because, in order not to abuse otherworldly technologies, and in order to relate to them in a right and proper way, we'll need a superior spiritual life. We can't even find it within ourselves to refrain from abusing the technologies we *already* possess.

"However, at some point in our evolutionary future, we'll finally be prepared for First Contact. But what about the *key* to First Contact? It may have something to do with our realization of a certain spiritual state we might call 'cosmic holiness'. Our otherworldly friends won't be looking to acquire technology, or even to ensure that we arrive at a specific technological level. Because whatever it is that they're searching for, I think that it transcends everything technology is capable of.

"I imagine that many races possess technology so advanced that, although they probably have room for further progress, they've reached the point where they're seeking the pinnacle of spiritual realization above everything else. One reason for this might derive from exterior influences. The average interstellar race might have some relationship with the First Ones. As I said before, the First Ones are the most ancient of races in the universe, the youngest of which possess technology so superior it would seem godlike to the junior starfaring civilizations.

"The oldest of the First Ones, on the other hand, need no technology. Nor do they desire it. They've left that cradle for good. And they'll never return to it. They'll never *want* to.

"After many cosmic eons, they've transformed into wholly ethereal beings. But the angelic order—at least its non-human element—we might think of as the oldest of the oldest Ancients,

created outside the physical universe from the very beginning. The angels didn't evolve into an intangible nature because they were gifted with such a nature at their creation.

"I believe that the common extraterrestrial race has encountered, or has even collaborated with, very ancient races. Surreal races. So old and exotic that even *they*—the younger starfarers—are wonderstruck at such beings.

"So technology doesn't interest the younger races to the extent that it does for a civilization like ours, which hasn't yet visited even Proxima Centauri. The junior starfarers want to forsake that crutch. That's because they've seen the grandeur of beings whose nature needs nothing in the physical world, nor anything based on or derived from the physical world. The 'youngers', as we might label them, are searching for higher things. Greater wonders than what they're now capable of.

"They want to see the face of God and touch it. They want to possess the highest truths in ways that are impossible for embodied beings—for creatures that find it necessary to aid, enhance and extend themselves using technology. They want to comprehend, as completely and perfectly as possible, the infinite Power and Intelligence that created our reality. In their own way, they want to *become* one of the First Ones.

"So the key to First Contact won't be a physical artifact or some technological wonder—although these might very well be the means by which such contact happens. Our interstellar friends are looking for something else. For the knowledge and wisdom by which they might advance on their spiritual path and eventually evolve into ethereality.

"Some have posited that the angels, those highest and first of all created beings, have bodies composed of spiritual material, as opposed to the crude stuff of which we're made. And so our otherworldly visitors are perhaps seeking to arrive at this refined form. The body follows the mind and spirit, and so when the two of these evolve towards the Truth, the body

itself must move in the same direction. But the mind and the spirit won't evolve unless progress in knowledge, wisdom and spiritual mastery takes place. This is where information comes into play.

"Mere information opens to knowledge which opens to wisdom which opens to spiritual realization. And I dare say that the latter, over long ages, brings about a natural evolution in the nature of creatures. And so the races of the stars seek to know what we know, discovering it in real time as *we* discover it. That's one reason why they're watching us. But they *could* turn inward to find it. Maybe they're doing both.

"Anyhow, the key to First Contact will be in discovering higher truths and godlike wisdom, which we'd share with our friends. Our respective civilizations can grow together into what we're all called to be by our wonderful Creator. Our job is to discover these spiritual treasures for our sake *and* theirs. And even if we possess some of this sublime knowledge now, we'll need to find more of it.

"On the other hand, a good number of the visitors might *already* possess some of the highest knowledge and wisdom. If that's true, then surely they've put that knowledge and wisdom to use and are waiting for us to do the same so that they can accept us into the cosmic community as worthy members. They could be waiting for us to reach a certain point in our evolution, at which time we'd join them on the great journey of existence.

"But let's return to the visitors' spiritual status. The saints teach us that we're made to worship God. Divine worship is the object of human life and, possibly, alien life. To experience God's love infinitely deep within you, and then to return that very love, knowing that the exchange isn't meant to end—*that* is living. An eternal, unending exchange of divine love-fire.

"But in all their covert watching, do our extraterrestrial friends fulfill this inner need—if they do, in fact, possess such a need? Can they perfectly fulfill this mandate if they're so busy

with all the monitoring they do? They might be technologically superior, but what's their spiritual standing?

"A number of those who've encountered extraterrestrial beings have reported that at least some of them have telepathic and possibly telekinetic abilities. Some of them may even have the ability to travel through time, to know the future or to shift into an intangible form. I think that it's quite natural to be in awe of these otherworldly beings and their abilities.

"But again, power and ability are mirages. Mental and technological toys provide no utility to the most evolved beings in the universe who are now—or who've always been—of an immaterial nature. Such civilizations would be laser-focused on inconceivably higher realities. To travel through time, or to open a portal into the universe next door, or to read every mind in existence or to move a mountain with a single thought—what good are these relatively mundane abilities if I'm unhappy? Only love can make one happy. In the *Hua Hu Ching* it says:

> The clairvoyant may see forms which are elsewhere, but he cannot see the formless. The telepathic may communicate directly with the mind of another, but he cannot communicate with one who has achieved no-mind. The telekinetic may move an object without touching it, but he cannot move the intangible. Such abilities have meaning only in the realm of duality. Therefore, they are meaningless. Within the Great Oneness, even though there is no such thing as clairvoyance, telepathy, or telekinesis, all things are seen, all things understood, all things forever in their proper places.

"Within the great oneness of Heaven, we'll exist as individuals. But individuals who collectively constitute *one spirit* with God. And so we won't have to read the minds of others. Because 'others' won't exist. That is, the self—one's self—will be *one* with all others.

"Thus, let me be so bold as to say that in the hereafter, everyone will know the mind of everyone else immediately and effortlessly. Each mind, although it'll produce its own content, will be known to all as if it belonged to all. In other words, the thoughts of individual minds will appear also in *all other* minds.

"In order for one mind to read another, they must exist in an existential state of separation. But deified minds exist in supernatural unity. I do imagine that in this life it takes some effort—or at least time—to perform a telepathic action. But in the life to come, effort will be replaced by effortlessness. And time will have no meaning.

"Now the clairvoyant, the telepath and the telekinetic are in no way superior to the mundane human being. It's true that exotic mental abilities are wondrous talents. But a talent, however high and mighty, doesn't make one individual better than the next. It certainly doesn't constitute the ultimate state of existence of any creature. The most sublime existence isn't defined by its abilities.

"Even so, such unusual and extraordinary talents are gifts from the Creator. Those who have them aren't wrong to use them if, so long as no evil is done, some greater good is served, even if this greater good is oriented to the self. But the exercise of wonderful powers and their desired effects will in no wise make one happy.

"Talents aren't the unending bliss of God. They're tools in the toolkit, not the Beatific Vision of Heaven. Even the most lavishly gifted individuals can't be happy, whether it's in this passing life or in the one to come, until they know, possess and communicate divine love.

"Because it's in and through love that we arrive at the apex of our creaturely existence. What if a creature possessed every possible physical and mental ability, but not the life of the soul? It would be an exceedingly powerful thing, but also a slave to its own power. Its life purpose would revolve around these abilities and their endless use.

"But what does such mastery accomplish? If you could conquer this universe and all others, what would it do for you? It certainly wouldn't make you happy, because all of the empty spaces in the human heart are bottomless. Infinitely deep. And only love can fill those spiritual voids. But the love has to be infinite in nature. Even a boundless universe of planets, stars and galaxies isn't the infinite love we require. But *God* is love. And God is infinite. Thus, God is the infinite love we need to fill the empty places deep within.

"Money, power, fame, science, technology...the world is full of things on which the human heart can set itself. But as Qoheleth says in the Book of Ecclesiastes, what foolish vanity they are. Oh, they can work wonders like magic. But to create a universe with God? That's something else again."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

After some back and forth with Camillus about what makes the deified human being a metaphysical paragon of Creation, Adam had a sudden flash of insight. “Father, you're right to say that love is the quintessence of greatness. However, the most excellent greatness belongs to God alone, because no creature can love as God does. We can never hope to love each other—or even God—with the immeasurable intensity of what God lavishes on us.

“We can't even begin to grasp the limitless, unbounded exchange between the three Persons of the Trinity. Each of the three is absolute love, unlimited in essence and nature. And each of the three Persons makes a total and eternal gift of self to the other two, forever permeating and suffusing them. They set each other aflame with unending love-fire, because each of them is, in essence, that very love-fire.

“We believe that we can give this love a name, but the word 'love' is grievously insufficient here. God's love surpasses all human love more than infinity transcends any finite number. And so can we really claim that we're capable of 'love'? In my opinion, a new word is necessary here, either for God or for us.

“We say that we worship God, but if we as finite beings are capable of worship, then what is the Almighty capable of? We're talking about something in a category above all possible others. And so if the words 'love' and 'worship' refer to what's contained in our hearts as creatures, we'd do well to invent new words to define the unfathomable depths of Divinity.

“Creatures are limited in nature. And so God's love isn't the love we're able to communicate. But God *does* love. And God *does* worship. Each Divine Person worships the two other Divine Persons. We just don't have a name for the boundless immensity that endlessly pours forth from the Divine Essence.

"Although we'll never really fathom the divine reality, we can know a little bit about how we should adore God. I believe that we should worship God as our Creator and as our best friend and as our lover—all at one time. Ideally, in our private worship, we'd synthesize these three loves into one. And I dare say that our worship was supposed to be that way from the very beginning.

"Some think of God only as their Creator, but this form of love is only a species of reverence. And some are close to God only in friendship, with no romantic element in that love. And yes, some souls do have a spiritually romantic relationship with God, but I think that these souls are rare. I can only hope and pray that everyone in the world will eventually embrace—either in time or in eternity—an all-encompassing love for the One who is love.

"You know, in the myth of Pygmalion, we see a glimmer of this reality. Pygmalion was a sculptor who fell deeply in love with one of his works, that of a beautiful woman. To make a long story short, the goddess Aphrodite brings the sculpture to life for him. He then marries the woman, and the two of them live happily ever after.

"There's a powerful truth in this myth—in the idea of a romantic, erotic relationship between creator and creation. We might categorize this notion as 'myth'. But God is *our* creator, one whose hunger for us is boundlessly intense and insatiable. This is not myth. *It's the living truth*.

"God's love for us is analogous to Pygmalion's love for his sculpture. We have a Creator who fashioned a staggering number of sculptures in the divine image and is madly in love with each of them. In a sense, a *divine* Pygmalion.

"Truly, romantic love—eros—is the most significant of the natural forms of human love. But how can we be sure of this? Because God ordained that every man leave his father and mother and cling to his helpmate for life.

"A man and a woman bid farewell to their parents and cling to each other for life. That's all the proof we need. If filial love ranked above the others, couples wouldn't leave the homes of their parents to make a home for their own children. Considering the primacy of romantic love and our insatiable hunger for it, it makes perfect sense that only God can completely satisfy this hunger. Chapter 62 of The Book of The Prophet Isaiah, especially in the New International Version, supports the argument, as does The Song of Songs, a conversation between the soul and God.

"So there are three natural ways to love God. The first is like, but not quite identical to, the filial love a son or daughter has for his or her parents. The second love is friendship. And the third is Eros.

"The first kind of love is what we have for God as our Provider. In it, we cling to God as the one who provides for all our needs and as the one to whom we flee for protection and spiritual sustenance. This is a natural, affective love. And again, it's akin to the love one has for a parent.

"I think that most people—at one time or another—have conceived of God as an old man with a beard, whom we call 'Father'. But this concept is only an aid to help us in our spiritual journey towards the truth. At some point, we have to let go of the notion of God as an old man with a beard, and who is our Father as such. Yes, God provides for our needs, and protects us and loves us in that way, just as our parents do.

"But the Divine Person we call 'God the Father' isn't a man. And so as long as we have this image within our minds of God as something like an earthly father—the image of a man, however divine and powerful he may be—we can never move beyond this limited concept to a holistic perspective of God. If it's blasphemous or heretical to say that we should jettison the idea of God as our Father, then let the idea persist. However, the word 'Father' as it applies to God must omit the concept of a man—or any male being for that matter.

"I think the label 'Father' was applied to God because of the paternal love God bestowed on humanity, and because the Father eternally begets Christ Jesus the Word. Therefore, the First Person of the Holy Trinity plays the *role* of a father, but isn't one's father in the same way as one's earthly father is.

"We should let the word 'Father', as it applies to God, mean that God is the one who provides for all our needs and for our protection, and who eternally begets the Son. That's it. If we insist on addressing God as 'Father', then so be it.

"But the notion of God as a being who is neither male nor female nor *any* conceivable gender must accompany the traditional notion of God as Father. In our conception of the Person of God, we should move on from an image based on gender to one that isn't, realizing that Christ alone took on a male human nature. Even at that, Christ isn't our father.

"If we continue to think of God as we would an *earthly* father, it will get in the way of our embracing God as a lover or spouse. As I said, romantic, erotic love is the most important of the natural human loves, and so it's imperative that we find a way to embrace God in this way, albeit on a spiritual level. Can you see how the idea of God as 'Father' could become an obstacle in our ascent to the truth? Who would even think of a spiritually erotic relationship with one's father?

"Christ *did* teach us to pray the 'Our Father'. And so we should retain that beautiful prayer while we move closer on our spiritual path to a panoramic notion of God. But in teaching us this prayer, the Lord didn't forbid us to go beyond the idea of God as a father.

"We were never commanded to stop there and go no further. Christ didn't say, 'You must forever think of God as your Father, never moving beyond that to the intimacy of a spiritual lover and spouse'. Many of the saints and mystics speak of God in erotic terms. And yet, even for those who choose to embrace what I'm saying, there's nothing wrong with addressing God as

'Father'. And that's because in doing so we honor the way that Christ addressed the One who sent him on his earthly mission.

"Let's love God as the one who provides for our needs, just as our earthly fathers do. But let's also love God as a best friend who alone can satisfy our need for erotic union. The one we can confide in without hesitation, and the one we should be closest to among those we love. Our all and our everything.

"The God who created us is an ideal, ultimate lover. An unlimited lover. Because if God does play a fatherly *role*, it's not in such a way that precludes romantic love. Because God alone can satisfy our erotic appetite, which is infinite and never dies. The divine nature is such that God can be anything to anyone.

"We see this in the writings of Julian of Norwich, whose idea of God was basically the same as what I'm proposing here. The only difference is that she also propounded the idea of God as 'Mother'. I believe that there were two reasons for this. First, because there's supposedly a 'feminine' quality or aspect in God. But the divine feminine doesn't make for a female gender.

"Secondly, Julian wrote about the concept of God as 'Mother' because divine love possesses a maternal vibe in terms of the human experience of it. It's not that God is a woman, or even female by any stretch of the imagination. It's just that God can love us in ways similar to how our earthly mothers love us—with a sweet gentleness, a tender compassion and a perfect understanding wholly lacking in most men.

"But aren't those the qualities of all the world's women? We can't say that the female qualities are possessed *only* by those women who've given birth. Women naturally possess a knowledge and wisdom we lack, but that's how it's supposed to be, because it's by design. And God possesses infinitely perfect feminine qualities as their divine Source. Do you agree, Father?"

"A beautiful image, Adam. Your idea of how to love God is alluring. It makes sense, at least to this old man. And I believe

your depiction of divine self-love works just fine. The term 'love-fire' does help to convey an impression of what God *is*. And yes, we should strive for the attainment of that spiritual state in which God is our Creator and caretaker on one hand, our best friend on another, and our spiritual lover and spouse on yet another.

"My prayer is that countless souls open themselves to God in the manner that Dame Julian of Norwich proposed. But that's a spiritual project for the Holy Spirit. For us, let's return to the alien presence on Earth. We can always talk more about God later. I want to go back to our alien friends. Or enemies, as the case might be.

"In some circles, the belief is that one or more races are 'bad actors'. Supposedly, these races intend to harm us, or at least their agendas are opposed to our best interests. Even if this proves true, and even if they're superior in nature, we're not powerless against them. Let me explain."

CHAPTER TWENTY

“Remember what happened with Jesus and his disciples while they headed for Jerusalem. The disciples asked whether they should call down heavenly fire on a Samaritan village. Because the villagers had rejected Jesus. But he scolded the disciples and nothing came of their bitterness. We gather two things from this. The first is that God's fire is very real. It's been used before. The biblical account of Elijah and the 'captain of fifty', among others, attests to this fact.

“If God would never act in this manner even under the most exceptional circumstances, would the sudden rebuke of the disciples have been necessary? Sure, the intention of the disciples was extreme in light of the circumstances. But if the calling down of divine fire were really just an allegory, I think the Lord would've said something like, 'You wish to do evil in your hearts, but what you ask is impossible'. But Christ didn't say that it was impossible. He merely rebuked them because he knew better than anyone else that the fire is real and that it's been used before. And I think that we're going to see it again before the end of the world.

“And due to the fact that God requires no technology, we have every reason to hold as true that the biblical 'fire from above' isn't technological. It descends from no created power. It's the immediate and direct power of the Almighty in action.

“And the second thing we gather is that the Heavenfire isn't something that God sends down for everyday evils. It's not for run-of-the-mill sinfulness. For very great evils, such as those that exceedingly debauch or enslave or destroy a population—or even the whole world—it's obvious God makes exceptions.

“Remember, in the Bible we read that entire cities were reduced to cinders. Not just individuals. Whole cities perished by it for their unsurpassed moral filthiness. Can anyone doubt

that God would send fire down on a great evil that threatens to destroy the world?

"What sense does it make to destroy two ungodly cities for their immorality but withhold punishment from an evil that seeks to corrupt, enslave or eradicate *the world's* population? To harm God's people isn't such a good idea. Just look at the tragedy that befell Pharaoh's army when it pursued Moses and the Israelites.

"But a possible caveat is in order here. Perhaps God's fire causes no suffering on the part of those who perish by it. Pain doesn't necessarily accompany the death of the body. It's my understanding that some deaths can be nearly painless. And that's within the confines of nature. Should we doubt that God can make somebody's passing *completely* painless?

"Could God remove reprobate souls from the world in this fashion only when God knows—in divine foreknowledge—that they'll experience complete conversion at the last moment and be saved forever? It's just as you said before, Adam. God can appear to the sinner in the moment prior to death, and it would be as if that moment lasted for a thousand years. Time enough for divine grace to work a great miracle of conversion and thus salvation. And so in the application of divine justice we'd have a great number of wayward souls who are removed from the world by the fire of God, but they pass on in complete painlessness *and* they're saved forever by God's grace. And to top it all off, the world is left in a better state.

"The same caveat may apply to an actual alien threat. *They* would be removed from us in the same manner. And the divine fire isn't something that even the most evolved creatures can avoid or defend against. Its potency is without limit. What's more, it's in no way restricted to physical targets. Its accuracy is unerring. Its reach infinite.

"Perhaps it wouldn't be contrary to the laws of charity to summon it for personal reasons and proactively. For example,

as an automatic response triggered by a future condition, such as if one were to become the target of an arranged suicide. The divine wrath would descend on the unfortunate assassin or assassins—and on whoever arranged for the hit.

"In theory, this proactive invocation wouldn't warrant a harsh rebuke from the Lord against the one who invoked it because he or she did it out of self-preservation to continue in God's work. Those who dare to summon the divine wrath, because they'd be successful in calling it down due to their faith, wisdom, holiness and intimacy with God, would remain faultless. I'll say it again: I think this trump card will be used again before the Last Day.

"And let me add that we'll never win the final battle of Armageddon with weapons of a physical nature, which are referred to in the military world as 'kinetic'. Such weapons may play an important role. And they may even be necessary. But ultimately they'll prove insufficient.

"The same is true for energy weapons. Even weapons of the mind, like remote viewing, telepathy and telekinesis, will be of limited use. The last battle, it seems to me, will be a spiritual conflict more than anything.

"With regard to the Final Battle, the world's elite might reconsider the wisdom of investing so many resources in the development of exotic physical and mental weapons. Because I believe that the spirit holds immense untapped potential. And since the fire from Heaven is real and can be summoned by the right individuals at the right time, bombs and bullets may play not the smallest part. We might say the same thing about psychogenic weapons.

"As disciples who attend to the spiritual interests of the Lord, we find it unnecessary to utilize such assets. We have all that we need for the fight ahead. In *The Book of The Way and Its Power*, known to the English-speaking world as the *Tao Te Ching*, we read the words, 'being armed without weapons'. My

favorite translation of this ancient book is the 1972 work by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, in which we read:

> Knowledge of the future
> is only a flowery trapping of the Tao.
> It is the beginning of folly.

"I believe that Lao-Tzu wrote these words because he knew that those who possessed such extraordinary gifts may become attached to them. They might come to abuse those powers—even in the service of evil. But as we advance on the spiritual way, we reach the point where we realize that our abilities have limits, whatever their nature and potency. We cease our pursuit of honing those abilities, and we drop any and all efforts to acquire more. Why? Because what we really desire transcends power and ability to such an extent that we can only describe it as 'no-power' and 'no-ability'.

"Ultimately, we want to become one with the Essence of God so that the divine powers, which are infinitely potent, accrue to our deified human nature. In this supreme state, we possess omnipotence by grace. It's extended to us, and we wield it like a sword as it were. As a sword is an extension of the warrior, so omnipotence can belong to the saint.

"Due to the fact that our natural abilities are limited, they eventually fail us. They can only move mountains so big. And so the powers of finite creatures, although they might be necessary in the end, will simply not be *adequate* for the final battle of good and evil, which lies before us in the future.

"Speaking of Armageddon, it seems that even Taoists believe in that future reality. In the life story of the monk Kwan Saihung, whose spiritual experiences are written down in the book *Chronicles of Tao*, we come across an immortal known as the 'Toad Taoist'. This being tells Saihung that one day there will be a global crisis. A confrontation between good and evil.

"On the surface, it may appear that Taoist masters and adepts use their abilities to perform amazing feats. But when you read the *Tao Te Ching* carefully, you discover that the true practitioner taps into the unlimited Tao to channel its power. In chapter 32 of that book, the Old Master writes that if kings and lords could harness the eternal Tao, then '*the ten thousand things would come together, and gentle rain fall*'. This is but a poetic way of saying that one can perform natural miracles by drawing on the Tao from deep within.

"The point is that even within non-Christian religions, philosophies and ways of life, we see the unlimited possibilities of turning to a power extrinsic to human nature. This idea is all the more appealing when we consider what it is that we're up against. As Saint Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians, our fight isn't against flesh and blood. Our struggle is against dark, invisible powers. The most ancient ones.

"In the movie *The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of The Ring*, there's a scene in which Gandalf tells Aragorn to lead the group of companions to relative safety, while Gandalf fights a demon from the first age of the world. Aragorn moves to join Gandalf in the fight, but Gandalf pushes him away and barks at him for thinking that a sword could be useful against a foe of this nature. It's symbolic of the wisdom and enlightened realization we need in our fight.

"Here in the real world, in the final battle between good and evil, we'll need weapons neither belonging to nor derived in any way from our impaired nature. And if alien forces intend to harm us—through annihilation, enslavement, exploitation or corruption—we have a supernatural weapon to use against them. And that's the fire from Heaven, called down by faith.

"But then we're forced to ask, 'Why do the evil powers set themselves against God if they know they can never hope for victory?' When we consider the omnipotence of the Lord, we wonder about their thinking. Why work against such a Power

and the servants thereof? It's absolute futility, and yet they press forward with their twisted agendas.

"Maybe they realize that victory is impossible, but aim for the next best thing—to afflict humanity for long ages. Before they're thrown down into the eternal abyss. Regardless of how successful they might be, we can take comfort in knowing that our present suffering will one day be *like a dream*.

"When we awaken from a nightmare, we realize that the terror, although it may spill over briefly into our awakened state, must go the way of the nightmare itself. In Heaven, the suffering that we endured in life will be like a dream—something that was real but is no longer so. It's gone forever, a non-reality that isn't. And so the afflictions of the fallen spirits—even those afflictions greatest in number or intensity—amount to nothing.

"Even so, let's hope that the *alien* threat doesn't exist. We certainly don't need a natural enemy *and* a supernatural one. God forbid that the former works for the latter.

"Hopefully, the theory of The Evolutionary Selection of Non-Aggression in Intelligent Beings is correct. It posits that an advanced civilization, before it reaches the point at which it can traverse the stars and do harm to other races, will destroy itself. That is, unless it finds a way to eliminate its aggressive tendencies. If I understand it correctly, the theory states that the development and use of weapons capable of destroying the home planet of a population will always, for one reason or another, precede the development, acquisition or discovery of a way to explore the cosmos. Thus, if a species can't rid itself of aggression, it will hit an existential dead end before it can go to the stars, let alone harm other races.

"And so we can hope and pray that our alien visitors are benevolent, or nonaggressive at the very least. If so, it may be true that although more advanced technologically, they'd seek a transcendence beyond the technological. Granted, we're not a perfect race. But relative to one or more extraterrestrial races,

maybe *we*, in fact, are the spiritual giants. Anyhow, I think that two intelligent races can acquire knowledge and wisdom from each other, wherever they may fall in the echelons of Creation."

“Still, we could gain more from them than what they'd gain from us. Because although humans and intelligent non-humans may be similar in many ways, the main difference between us might be that some of *them*—or even possibly all—would require no redemption. Because they may not have sinned.

“What if the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil can exist only on our world and the worlds of *extraterrestrial human* populations? If that's true, then humans are unique—except for the angels—in possessing such knowledge. But the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is probably just a metaphor for whatever it was that provided Adam and Eve with that awareness. Even so, the reality stands.

“Anyhow, what was the Tree of Knowledge doing in the Garden if, by eating its fruit, sin could be introduced into the world? In other words, why would God create such a thing and place it in the Garden, thus making it available to the man and woman? If eating its fruit unlocks the door to sin and evil, why would God even allow its existence?

“It may have something to do with allowing the exercise of an *informed* free will. A type of free will exists—we might call it 'primal'—because it can be exercised without the knowledge of good and evil. It's obvious that a creature can exercise free will without such knowledge. Look at Adam and Eve in their unfallen state before they ate the arboreal fruit.

“In a state of natural perfection, a creature's thoughts, words and actions, all exercised through free will, are perfectly innocent with regard to intent. They contain no evil intention. Although, objectively speaking, it's possible for a creature in this primal state to act contrary to God's will.

“The First Parents sinned without the knowledge of evil. They were capable of sin, and *did* sin before they acquired this

knowledge. When the First Woman decided to taste the fruit—although it hadn't yet touched her lips—in that very instant, evil entered the world. She hadn't yet come into the knowledge of good and evil when she incurred guilt for the first time.

"And because Adam and Eve possessed intellect and free will, it's well within the bounds of reason to suppose that some non-humans with such faculties would be able to sin in *their* innocence. But unlike us, if otherworldly beings were called to enjoy *only* a natural happiness below Heaven, God wouldn't need to test them, so to speak. And this, in turn, implies that God wouldn't allow the Tree to be placed in their midst. Whatever the truth may be, such creatures would be able to act against God from an objective standpoint.

"But as long as creatures possess the knowledge of good and evil, they can exercise a kind of free will *informed* by that knowledge. In a naturally innocent state, one chooses to do good without knowing it. And if one freely chooses to do evil, it's without the knowledge that one is doing evil. So how could the Creator rightly punish the man and the woman if they had no evil knowledge or intent? How did their consuming the fruit amount to sin if, from the standpoint of objective truth, they had no knowledge of evil?

"As I see it, their love for God is key to understanding how they could've sinned in a state of primal innocence. Due to their original love, they were perfectly capable of obeying God without question. Unlike us, they didn't need to know the reason behind any commandment.

"The divine prohibition against eating the fruit couldn't have been the first law that they were given. Before this, many divine 'laws of love' were probably promulgated. But Adam and Eve obeyed those laws in their love for God, who walked with them and who was perceptible to them in one or more ways. The original love in their hearts is what moved them to obey without question and without condition.

"God thus had the First Parents' love and obedience. But God probably instructed them in those virtues, nurturing and strengthening the love that was built into their human nature. Thus they had no excuse for eating the fruit, thereby incurring guilt for breaking the commandment.

"They knew nothing of good and evil, and so their guilt didn't arise from that knowledge. It was the result of a lapse in their obedience to God, and therefore a lapse in their love for God. But they also ignored, at least for one brief moment, the instructions and teachings they received directly from their Creator about love and obedience.

"They were fairly warned of the consequences. If they had obeyed, they wouldn't have fallen into a self-inflicted life of drudgery, pain and death. If they had obeyed, the human race wouldn't have descended into the sorry state it's in now. That's the value of obedience to God, a virtue that preserves health and life.

"But we have to ask the question again, 'Why did God place the tree within the Garden if its fruit opened the door to informed sin?' Why would God make it possible for creatures to sin by way of evil knowledge? Wouldn't it have been better to make it impossible for anyone to eat the fruit? We can't be certain, but we can speculate that *God didn't make the tree*.

"Who wanted Adam and Eve to eat its fruit? The enemy of our race. The first of the fallen ones. That vile creature who, at the dawn of the human race, took the form of a serpent. If God created the tree, why would the serpent greatly desire that the woman eat its fruit? Whatever God creates is good!

"If the Divine Will had truly wanted humanity to possess the knowledge of good and evil from the very beginning, God would've built it into human nature. Thus, an external source of acquisition would've been unnecessary. I believe we can posit, with reasonable confidence, that the Tree was the serpent's creation. God didn't create it because God didn't need it.

"Genesis tells us that the serpent tempted the woman into eating the fruit with the idea that she could be like God, in that she could possess the knowledge of good and evil. After she and Adam ate the fruit, they suffered the effects. And God punished the serpent by way of a degeneration in its nature. Whereas before it didn't move from location to location on its belly, now it did. This implies that previously it walked, flew or swam—or all three.

"The serpent naturally possessed the qualities of self-awareness, intelligence and craft. From its creation. A rational being with free will, it could communicate with any creature.

"And so despite its evil state of mind, it had the ability to design the Tree, the fruit of which contained the knowledge of good and evil. Although it was serpentine in nature, it had a humanoid body. We could propose that it was a higher, superior reptilian. Or did it merely *appear* to be a humanoid serpent? If it wasn't actually a serpent with a physical body that allowed it to walk and talk, then its reptilian appearance might've been the result of a telepathic transmission—an 'avatar' placed within the minds of Adam and Eve, the First Couple. If a good angel can appear as a beggar, it seems reasonable to assume that a fallen angel can appear as an upright serpent.

"If so, did the serpent's punishment consist of a mental bridle? Did God place a limiter on its mind that prevented it from telepathically projecting itself as an intelligent, upright reptilian? Either way, the serpent's punishment could've been temporary.

"God could've restored its original nature or removed its limiter. Whether or not its limitations have been lifted, maybe it now has servants to attend to its agenda. Could it be that the serpent *designed* and produced some of those servants, just as it did with the Tree? I guess much depends on whether it had a physical body or not. Or whether it could 'shift' into bodily form.

"In any case, the biblical depiction of the Enemy as an intelligent serpent might be metaphorical in some ways, but it

doesn't matter too much. Perhaps it was a creature of such an exotic nature that the word 'serpent' would be a misnomer. But to engineer a tree—an actual, physical tree—it must've been a physical being. Or again, a being that could shift into and out of physical form. Or maybe it created the tree through its servants.

"The serpent was originally created as an angel of the highest order. But after learning, among other things, that God planned to present the idea of co-creation to the human race, the Evil One became enraged. But his anger subsided in time. And approaching God's eternal throne he spoke, saying that humanity remained faithful to its Creator only because it hadn't acquired the knowledge of good and evil. Should it receive this knowledge it would fall into sin forever.

"Never would it return to the Eternal Light. Knowledge of the pleasures of sin would prevent such a return. And so the human race would be irredeemable. Lost for eternity. In fact, it would worship the serpent, rejecting God's love everlastingly.

"The Evil One proceeded to deride God, claiming that humanity's weakness was a design flaw. And that God thereby erred in creation. This was the thinking of the Evil One.

"He continued with complaint after complaint, daring to lecture the Most High God before the angelic court. And in his supreme pride, he asked to rule over an entire world. Because if the gift of co-creation could never be his, and if he'd never be allowed to rule over the whole universe, he decided that he was entitled to a minuscule piece of the cosmos. He believed that his audacity would be readily forgiven because he was the eldest of creatures and, before his fall, the highest.

"The Evil One petitioned God therefore, who gave him Earth to rule over. He also received the ability to transform into physical form—or to *appear* in physical form to human eyes—as a physical, upright serpent. Thus the Enemy descended to our world with the ability to think and reason, and to learn with supernatural capacity. And the serpent engineered the Tree of

the Knowledge of Good and Evil, either by itself or with the help of physical servants, using as a basis one or more other trees that God had made in the Garden.

"But God told the serpent that even if the First Parents were to disobey and eat the fruit, a very great good would result from that failure despite the ill effects, and that they wouldn't be sundered from their God forever. The serpent, disbelieving this, went to work on the Tree's design. And the rest is history.

"Now, regarding the knowledge of good and evil, we can indulge in a bit of speculation about extraterrestrial races. They may not possess it. God knows that knowledge of this kind would eventually lead to the fall of any race possessed of such capacity. And that to right such a fall, salvific redemption of some kind would be necessary. One of the Divine Persons would probably assume the nature of the fallen race and atone for its sins in some fashion, presumably by a bodily death. But God has no such obligation.

"Ideally, the infinite Source of all good things would enjoy perfect, unbroken felicity—eternally free from suffering at all times and in all places. And so it's quite telling that the Eternal Creator descended to Earth, even if for only a single human lifetime, to suffer and to die for us all. This was more than generous of God.

"Would we think any less of our God if even *one* fallen race went unredeemed? When creatures freely choose to sin, does God incur a debt to them? Again, God isn't obligated to do anything, but is perfectly free to choose who or what to redeem if there's to be any redeeming at all.

"But if a sufficiently large number of races have fallen as we have, would we demand of God unequaled suffering—death after death on one world after another—all for their salvation? In Scripture it says that God often wearied of Israel's sins. And so if God tired of the sins of a tiny subset of humanity, imagine God's weariness in an endless series of redemptive sacrifices.

"We can therefore make the reasonable assertion that God allowed relatively few races in the universe to acquire the knowledge of good and evil. Basically, that the vast majority of civilizations wouldn't have been exposed to the Tree. In other words, you'd never find it on most inhabited worlds. On the contrary, a single world of brokenness—*Earth*—is more than enough of a demand on God's mercy.

"God commanded that the man and woman not eat the Tree's fruit, knowing full well what would befall humanity if the First Parents disobeyed. But if God's faithful angels know good and evil, it seems that such knowledge isn't inherently a bad thing in itself. So then why did God forbid Adam and Eve to acquire it? Perhaps because they weren't ready for it.

"Before the Fall, human nature might've been designed to evolve into this awareness. Possibly, we would've acquired the knowledge of good and evil by *spiritual progress* without suffering the slightest negative consequence. But the serpent made the Tree with the intention of introducing it prematurely to humanity.

"But even if we'd reached the necessary spiritual state to acquire the knowledge of good and evil without ill effect, that wouldn't have prevented *individuals* from falling into sin by way of this knowledge. And any such sin would result in that same degradation caused by our premature acquisition of the knowledge. The very first personal sin of an unfallen individual must always cause the physical and spiritual downfall of his or her race because everyone is connected to everyone, both biologically and spiritually.

"Stated in another way, to evolve spiritually to the point where the knowledge of good and evil can be safely acquired doesn't prevent the possibility of the subsequent devolution of human nature via the *personal sins* of one or more individuals in the state of innocence. And so human nature can fall in two ways. The first is by gaining the knowledge prematurely. And

the second is by one or more sins committed *after* the point in time at which human beings acquire this knowledge through 'spiritual evolution'.

"The serpent must've been cognizant of the inevitability that human nature, even if it acquired the knowledge of good and evil through natural progress, would eventually suffer a fall via personal sin somewhere down the road. But what if the Evil One didn't want to wait? Impatience *is* a vice, and the Enemy is the father of vices.

"The important thing is that God only made it *possible* to eat the fruit of the Tree. It wasn't withheld from them. God merely forbade the act. And I suspect that relatively few races have been exposed to this perilous knowledge. Races that are so informed, such as humanity, are a cosmic minority.

"And therefore few if any races acquire a sense of right and wrong in this way. We can hypothesize, however, that in the alien races' primal innocence they never once sinned as we did. But how is this possible? How can a race of intelligent, rational beings never sin, especially if they possess free will?

"Statistically, isn't it certain that at least one individual will commit *at least one* sin in each race possessed of intelligence and free will, thereby causing a ripple effect? Remember, no sin committed in a state of primal innocence can possibly be due to the knowledge of good and evil because this knowledge doesn't exist in one who lives in that innocence. All sin committed in the innocent state, and the ensuing guilt, would come from a betrayal of one's primordial love for God—and of God's love in turn. It's a type of conscience.

"But what if God didn't grace these races with the divine presence, as we once enjoyed in the beginning? God *walked* with Adam and Eve, who were *naturally* capable of love. What if extraterrestrial races, perhaps like some forms of life on Earth, have no natural ability to love? Furthermore, what if they weren't privileged with God's presence to instruct them?

"In lacking the ability to love, they'd have no way to sin against God by any kind of failure to love God. No love exists against which they could think, speak or act. Couple this with the idea that they've never interacted with God—with a divine presence by which they'd be guided and instructed in all good ways—and you have the makings of an extraterrestrial reality devoid of sin and the guilt associated with it.

"In having neither the knowledge of good and evil nor the gift of conscience nor the ability to love nor any teaching from on high, an extraterrestrial species couldn't be blamed by God for objective wrongs. A race such as this would abide in subjective innocence. A *natural* blessedness!

"We can call it 'subjective innocence' because, although an extraterrestrial subject wouldn't be capable of sin *per se*, it could still act contrary to what's good in an objective sense. But this act would be performed without ensuing guilt. Ergo, no sin.

"We can define sin as an act contrary to God's will, the performance of which always results in guilt, and in which one distances one's self from God. Sin can emerge in one or more ways. It can accompany—and actually be informed by—the knowledge of evil. Or it can arise through a failure in one's love for God or through a disregard for divine teaching.

"But if an extraterrestrial subject possesses neither the knowledge of right and wrong nor any ability to love God nor a conscience by which it can sense that something isn't in accord with the ways of goodness, then sin—at least the kind that ends in personal guilt—is impossible. A creature like this can certainly commit objective wrongs. But in no way can it commit personal sin, to which guilt is inherent.

"However, in possessing intellect and free will, such a creature will eventually think a thought, utter a word or perform an act contrary to what's good and true. Let's imagine a being with the ability to think, reason and make voluntary decisions. Now imagine that it has existed from the eternal past without

doing a single thing wrong in God's eyes. This is impossible on a natural level. It would require something beyond a miracle.

"But when wrongdoing is guiltless, the creature has no reason to fear any negative effects from the wrongdoing itself. Because the definition of sin—to which 'punishment' is often ascribed—necessarily includes guilt. The innocent alien race would therefore need no redemption, and thus one of the Holy Trinity wouldn't need to incarnate on the homeworld of such a race. However, if extraterrestrials do truly exist—in accord with my belief that they do—they'd probably be mortal like us.

"And let me tell you why, Adam. According to Scripture, the Fall in the Garden caused a very great ripple effect. Not only were the First Parents affected, together with their offspring and their descendants, but the land itself and the animals were altered. In fact, the world and everything in it changed. All things devolved into a lower creation due to Original Sin. But isn't all life bound together? A universal, cosmic law of oneness exists that binds *all* beings together in a very real way.

"And so human beings and beings from other planets enjoy a certain unity. Thus, the effects of Original Sin on Earth rippled out into the universe and affected innumerable worlds. One with us on a spiritual level—the highest of levels—these races experienced, along with ourselves, all the evils of the Fall. And the most significant of these was death.

"I've read that when we tested the world's first nuclear bomb in the Forties, the weapon caused a shock wave of a certain kind to propagate through the universe. It was different in nature from the physical and energetic shock waves local to the epicenter. The nature of the propagation was such that the boundaries of Earth couldn't contain it. It was powerful enough to go far beyond our solar system.

"If this is true, then it's not surprising that sightings of UFOs, usually taken to be craft of otherworldly beings, have increased substantially since the inception of the Atomic Age.

Some claim that these races detected our atomic detonations. And knowing the destructive potential of such weapons, they've come here to find a way to either convince us to forsake nuclear weaponry, or to force the issue if all else fails.

"And if the detonations of nuclear weapons on our world could alert these races on their distant worlds, is it too much for anyone to believe that Original Sin robbed the extraterrestrials of natural immortality? Look at the pattern. Humankind commits its very first sin. Humankind begins to die. The flora begin to die. The fauna begin to die. The whole of Earth begins to die. But did it stop there?

"Humans, plants and animals began to die, but do we have to suppose that it ended there? Here on Earth, the reality of death took root in *all* species, all the way down from human beings to the lowest of life-forms. The point is that death didn't confine itself to the species that committed the first sin—*Homo sapiens sapiens*. Death was transmitted to *every last one* of the non-human species. And I venture to say that a large segment of the cosmic population is non-human. And since Original Sin was a non-physical reality, it wasn't bound by the borders of our world. It was like a spiritual atomic bomb. Its effects went far beyond our world, affecting *all* life.

"Actually, to say that Original Sin was a spiritual atomic bomb is really a gross understatement. The sin's effects were infinitely greater in magnitude than that of the bomb. The sin was a rift between the infinite Creator and human beings, the highest created beings on Earth. When the rift was formed—when the universal bond was torn asunder—unimaginably staggering negative energies were released.

"Quasi-infinite in nature, these energies traveled far out into the universe, wreaking such havoc that even the Bomb's cosmic effects had nothing on them. But the greatest impact of Original Sin was beyond the First Couple's imagination. It opened the door to the inner death of the soul.

"Again, all things are part of a whole. All creatures are joined existentially. It's in the spirit that they're bound together. And so when the human race on Earth fell from grace and began to die, extraterrestrial races on other worlds also began to die. They were immortal before the Fall.

"The alien races didn't fall in the sense of sharing in the onerous guilt of Original Sin. But it afflicted them nevertheless. The same as if they'd eaten the fruit themselves. And therefore the living creatures in the cosmos, at least the embodied ones, began to die.

"Possibly, some alien races suffered the effects almost immediately, and some at a later time. But as it is now, and as a general rule, life comes to a physical end. Could this explain why accounts of alien encounters include those wherein the 'visitors' express aggressive behavior? Are they angry—even bitter—at us for having to endure death? I do wonder.

"In any case, just because extraterrestrials experience death, it doesn't necessarily mean that they live relatively short lives as we do. I'd wager that some of them live for a very, very long time. Whether 'a very, very long time' means a thousand years or a million years, the important thing is that some alien lifespans are much longer than our own.

"But they *are* mortal beings. In no way are their bodies indestructible. Even they must pass.

"Now, God could've preserved a few races from death. Undying races may exist that would otherwise be subject to physical dissolution but have been graced by God with natural immortality in order to perform special work in the universal plan of salvation, especially here on Earth. But I imagine that they'd still be subject to death through illness or injury.

"They could be from distant regions of the cosmos—or from the distant future. Probably, they'd be light years beyond us in both spiritual and technological terms. But it's a good bet that if they're here on Earth, their concern would be with our spiritual

ascension. And as I see it, the human race is important enough in the grand scheme of things that it would be most proper for such aid to come our way."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Camillus, maintaining a monopoly on the conversation, turned now to the human race's great importance in the universe. “In this thing we call 'Creation'—which includes everything that isn't God, including those dimensions, realities and universes besides our own—there's an exhaustive spectrum of life. From things of a physical nature to things that aren't physical. From creatures whose essence consists of pure energy to, perhaps, creatures whose essence is made up of something which isn't energy or matter *or spirit*. From entities without intelligence to those whose intelligence is quasi-infinite. From beings that die to perhaps those that never die. For God is infinitely creative.

“A good read of the literature gives one the sense that Earth has been visited by a variety of civilizations. And one may get the impression that some might not be from elsewhere, but *elsewhen*. Given such diverse visitation, one could believe that we're more important than we think in this drama of cosmic life.

“When we really think about it, it's either a coincidence that many civilizations are visiting us at once, or we actually do occupy an important place in Creation. What possible reason could these races have to study, guide and interact with us *in a discreet way* if we're mere nothings on the cosmic stage? Why would so many alien races *linger* here? Perhaps they just stumbled upon us. But if we weren't important in the grand scheme of things, they would've moved on. But they remain.

“A sort of thought experiment comes to mind. Suppose the existence of a relatively young and a relatively inferior race of creatures called 'Terrans'. They live on a world called 'Terra'. Now, compared to a large number of other intelligent species in the universe, they're quite inferior in terms of one or more of the following: technological achievement, essence and nature, knowledge, wisdom and spiritual realization.

"Additionally, let's suppose that a highly advanced race decides to visit the Terrans for whatever reason and remains for long ages on their world. Let's also suppose that a second highly advanced alien race enters the picture and remains for a significant length of time. Further, suppose that many more races visit Terra. Finally, assume that Terra isn't the only world abounding with natural resources, even those necessary for highly advanced civilizations. Worlds rich in natural resources, although not exactly superabundant, are quite numerous. A necessity, it seems, for a richly-populated universe.

"Given all that, can we seriously entertain the idea that these superior races would spend so much time on Terra if the Terrans were insignificant inhabitants of the universe'? It's an indication of their greatness that the Terrans are being visited by any number of highly advanced civilizations. Perhaps the visitors know that the greater part of the Terrans' excellence lies in a dormant state.

"And keep in mind that Terra isn't quite so unique in terms of abundant natural resources. Many planets exist that have all of the natural resources these civilizations could ever need. Their own worlds, or worlds nearby, have to be cases in point. And some of these planets may be *uninhabited*.

"But if an extraterrestrial civilization is able to develop the technology to traverse the stars—and even galaxies—then it's hard to believe, quite frankly, that it hasn't discovered a way to convert energy into matter in an efficient manner and on a mass scale. In my mind, that would allow such a civilization to continue and preserve its culture without having to harvest, refine, process or deplete resources from other worlds. And so I believe that Terra isn't being visited for its natural resources.

"Furthermore, interstellar alien races, *at least those sufficiently advanced*, having found a way to convert energy into matter efficiently and on a mass scale, would also be able to alter themselves genetically. And develop effective cures for

diseases. And so the more advanced races wouldn't need to abduct and study Terrans for genetic or medicinal purposes.

"And so I can't believe that highly advanced races are visiting the Terran homeworld for its resources. Rather, it's for who and what the Terrans are. Their inherent potential. Their dormant greatness. The knowledge and the wisdom and the spiritual realization they'll eventually attain in the future.

"We should turn a deaf ear to those who seem to take great delight in their narrative that human beings are primitives compared to the non-humans that linger on or near our world. Humanity is *royalty*. We are a great species. We are gods. We are important. And we have so very much to offer the cosmic community. There's something in us that only God can see.

"When it finally comes to light, even the angels—those highest and oldest of created beings—will be astounded. Their silence will speak volumes of our magnificence. But if even the angels can wonder at us, how will lesser intelligences react? Actually, we could say that our visitors *have* reacted, finding us worthy enough to set a course for our world and remain here.

"We're important because we're made in the image of the infinite and eternal Power and Intelligence that created the universe. Mirrors of the unlimited God. Images of the almighty Creator who made this reality and any others that may exist.

"But is humankind the *only* living image of the Creator? I suspect that God, alone and unilaterally, created countless universes. But I also think that God created universes with the participation of deified non-human beings. Could I ever claim with sufficient confidence that *only* humankind is destined to co-create universes with the Maker of All? It has to be true that other intelligent races—or at least other human populations on other worlds—have been or *will be* so gifted.

"Indeed, co-creation is the ultimate equalizer. Because even if human beings are currently inferior to most starfaring extraterrestrial races, our deification and theirs will place us on

an equal footing. We'll all be co-creators of realities. The higher intelligent creature and the lower won't exist, for both will be deified into transcendence. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*.

"But what makes us so unique or important among the unnumbered alien races? If we can't lay an exclusive claim to an eternal future of co-creation with God, then why have we attracted so much attention from our visitors? Apart from the fact that they can benefit from the knowledge and wisdom that we've gleaned from our spiritual pursuit of God over the ages, another reason comes to mind.

"It's that we could be a race of unifiers destined to join not only various and sundry things in the world as it is now, but also the universes we'll co-create with God as deified persons in eternity. Because even in our present state, we're unifiers, albeit bound by the physical laws of the cosmos. We unite with each other in relationships and in the procreative act. We join parts and pieces to produce such things as trinkets, gadgets, vehicles and structures. We unite kingdoms, empires, states and colonies in their division.

"Regarding the latter, perhaps the best example of this urge within the human heart was reflected in the aspirations of the daimyo Oda Nobunaga, who set out to unite a fractured Japan. Other figures throughout history accomplished similar feats, including the Founding Fathers of the United States. But Nobunaga's ambition, although he failed to realize it before his death, has always appealed to me in a most special way.

"But from all our unitive ways, one can clearly see what we are. We're unifiers by nature—more so, I suspect, than any other race. We love what's joined and spurn what isn't.

"Perhaps benevolent otherworldly races are exploiting this attribute, who've taken it upon themselves to groom us for admittance into a great intergalactic body. This cosmic entity,

possibly one of an untold number, is doing its part to unite a universe at war with itself.

"Between who knows how many starfaring races in the universe, much narcissism, apathy and even enmity may exist. Certainly contention and conflict. Thus, one or two of the more altruistic elements within this political alliance may be visiting us because they desire our help in uniting a divided Creation, and to deal with the negatively oriented forces in the cosmos.

"However, we have our own share of problems here at home. The Evil One has not only sown division on *this* world. I suspect that this immensely powerful spirit, the first created intelligence to exist, long ago divided the universe into two or more universes. This, of course, is a wild conjecture."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

It seemed to Adam that Camillus had been speaking for hours. Looking down at the floor, the hermit monk paced to and fro, his hands held gracefully behind his back. He wasn't close to being done. “We're talking about an incorporeal being, created as a ministering spirit, that existed beside God when all other created things existed only as ideas in the Eternal Mind. The spirits that God subsequently created were relatively inferior in terms of power and intelligence. Well, at least until the angelic rift, that turning point at which the wayward angels separated themselves from God and the good angels.

“In the beginning, the First Creature was in accord with the Creator's will. Its light was perhaps undimmed for very long ages in celestial time. But eventually the Day Star ceased to emit the Uncreated Light. It grew cold and died out.

“But God wouldn't indulge its dark desires. In its anger with God, in its rebellion against the Divine Will, one might say it threw a fit of rage and tore the cosmos asunder, dividing it into two or more universes. We read in the Book of Revelation that the Dragon had the power to sweep a third of the stars with its tail, flinging them to Earth.

“In other words, this spirit once possessed staggering, almost inconceivable power. Some would probably question the literal interpretation of that passage, because if the Dragon had hurled stars to Earth, we wouldn't be here to talk about it. But the passage can be true both literally *and* allegorically.

“Literally, because stars *were* thrown at our world, but God or the good angels intervened, preventing our destruction. Allegorically, because the stars that were thrown at the world represent the fallen angels. The Dragon, as the first and most powerful of the dissidents, ordered them to 'throw themselves' at Earth en masse. Because if the world couldn't be *physically*

destroyed by a volley of suns, then the Dragon would do all it could to destroy it spiritually by sheer demonic numbers.

"But even if it's pure allegory, this passage of Revelation could've been written, through the use of symbolic figures, to convey the literal truth that the fallen angels had the God-like ability to manipulate entire regions of the universe. Or at least the Dragon had the ability. It's reasonable to suppose that, if the Dragon could throw unnumbered stars at the world, then it also had the power to operate on the very fabric of the cosmos—to divide the cosmos into two or more spheres of existence.

"On the assumption that it was divided in this manner, our universe might currently overlap the universe or universes sundered from it. These universes might be superimposed on ours. Or they could be joined like a cluster of soap bubbles. If that's true, it could be that extraterrestrial races *have* entered our universe from neighboring realities.

"When the cosmos was divided, maybe complex life, or merely unicellular life, already existed in the sundered regions. If that's the case, then it's probable that some of the intelligent life-forms therefrom originated in *our* universe. And now the extraterrestrials have discovered their true origin.

"In the difficult course of their evolution, they might've somehow discovered that their cosmos originated in another cosmos. And they might've learned how to cross over. Or they might've been given the knowledge of their cosmic origin, how to discover its location and how to get to it. But were our alien visitors also informed of our existence and where exactly we live? Were they given the knowledge of how to get to Earth or the means to travel here? Nothing can really be ruled out.

"But *why* were their realities torn away? *Why* would the Dragon of Revelation carve up the cosmos? Because of what it learned from God.

"God revealed something to the angels of Heaven, and it wasn't to the liking of many. They learned that humanity was

to become one spirit with God, and that thereby human beings would become like creators themselves. The angels were told they would have no part in this. They had been the recipients of wonderful things, inconceivable to the human mind. But it was humanity's turn to be lavished with strange new gifts.

"For the angelic natures possessed power, intelligence and other abilities that far surpassed those of human nature. As creatures having none of the limitations of physical bodies, they could do almost the unimaginable. And they were gifted with the stewardship of at least one younger race: humanity.

"Yes, the angels had received generous gifts from their Creator, but some of them felt shortchanged, and demanded what wasn't meant for them." Camillus paused, then turned to face Adam. "They were denied."

"In the rage of that moment, the demons were born. In their arrogance and in their narcissism, they rose against the Almighty, who subsequently had them thrown down. However, before being stripped of their powers, they rent the cosmos.

"Entire regions of the universe were cut away, dividing reality itself. And keep in mind that the Dragon desires the existential annihilation of all things, even if the lesser evil spirits don't. If he couldn't get what he really wanted—to have all of Creation *uncreated*—he could at least divide the cosmos, and in that way remove untold species from the mother universe. Exiled in a very real sense, such creatures would be unable to participate in the larger cosmic community. It's possible that individual races were isolated, suffering existential loneliness.

"The Dragon couldn't unmake reality. However, he could divide and alienate the life within it. Metaphorically speaking, he got what he wanted. His desire was satisfied in part. Because to be transposed to another universe is to cease existing, in a very real way, to the inhabitants of the universe from which one was transposed. One could question the ability of the Enemy to do such a thing. I mean, isn't this the stuff of fantasy?

"We'd do very well to remember that God endowed the angels with inconceivably superior natures. We'd refuse to accept the reality of their powers if the full extent of those powers were to be exercised before us. But one among them was so exalted that it could've been said that he transcended even the angelic. He was positioned above all other created beings, including the other angels, yet below God.

"And so what a tragedy it was that the most luminous angel, along with many lesser lights, turned and embraced evil forever. We should note that the division of the cosmos was in no way an act of omnipotence. Rather, it was an alteration of something that already existed.

"But the division of the universe into one or more parts is an incredible concept. Maybe a bit of Scripture can support it. In the Gospel of Luke, in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we read what the patriarch Abraham said to the Rich Man: '*And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us*'.

"I interpret this to mean that God set apart an entire realm—a whole universe—for those who permanently reject their Creator. The patriarch Abraham tells the Rich Man that an uncrossable abyss separates Heaven and the place where the Rich Man went after he passed away. And we know where the rich man is, not because he had great wealth, but because he hoarded that wealth, never using it for purposes other than what served his own good.

"Anyway, between Heaven and Earth there exists no such abyss. If there were, how would human souls ascend to Heaven? How would angels descend to Earth? But between Heaven and Hell there's a real divide—a void that's absolutely uncrossable for creatures, including intangible ones.

"The question now arises regarding this 'dark universe' and its nature: Did God *create* it as a domain for malevolent

spirits and lost souls? Or did God, in order to establish such a domain, appropriate one of the possibly many orphan universes that were torn away by the First Creature? I'm convinced that God wouldn't perform an act of creation just for the habitation of recalcitrant creatures. From its inception, such an abode would necessarily be dark and terrible. How can anyone believe that God would *want* to create such a domain?

"In my opinion, this 'dark universe' must be the work of the Evil One. I suspect that he was told to choose as his eternal prison one of the universes formed in his wrath. In any case, the Dark Universe must be forever separated from our universe, at least after everything's said and done. The damned must have a domain of existence to themselves. Otherwise, the blessed in Heaven would forever suffer the presence of the eternally lost. An eternal parting of ways is necessary.

"The inhabitants of the Dark Universe—'Hell', as it's usually called—hate themselves and all others. Well, at least in some way, shape or form. No love exists there. Many of them, perhaps even all of them, don't want to exist. So why would it be necessary for them to live endlessly in the company of the saints if, in accord with the darkness in their hearts, they could forever maltreat each other instead? The saints surely wouldn't want to suffer such company forever.

"In a certain way, each side—good and bad—believes that its 'vibration' is the way to go. Each side believes that its ways are right, good and true. At least in the eyes of the fallen angels, I should say, evil is the right and true way.

"So forget for a moment about who's right and who's wrong. Forget for a moment about who follows the good and true path and who doesn't. It almost doesn't matter, because both groups will receive their heart's desire, the result of which will be eternal separation from one another. Those we tend to label as 'good' will have their Heaven, and those we tend to label as 'bad' will have their Hell.

"But I imagine that the Dark Universe isn't a universe as most people would conceive a universe. Spirits exist apart from matter, space and time. So they're normally not limited to or by such things. But we hold, from the parable of the Rich Man, that a realm exists from which even spirits can't exit. A spiritual black hole. And so the Dark Universe isn't like a normal universe.

"The sphere of existence into which self-exiled human souls and the evil spirits will go is the supernatural equivalent of a black hole. Whatever it is, we might be so bold as to posit that it was at one time part of our universe. That is, it was a region of spacetime cut away by the First Creature, thus becoming an independent domain. But God transformed it into a physical *and* spiritual abode appropriated to serve as the prison of the eternally lost. One can enter. But none can leave.

"The bottom line is that if an eternal, all-powerful God can create an entire universe like ours, then the First Creature could've managed to fracture it. Because again, to divide an existing thing isn't an omnipotent act. The universe's division is an event that we can hardly imagine, much less believe. Still, the most powerful and intelligent creature ever to exist was more than capable of doing it. It didn't require omnipotence.

"Some may find this a bit easier to accept if they were to think about the size of the universe close to the moment of creation. The 'Big Bang' of cosmology. Again, spiritual beings aren't limited by the laws of the physical world. They have no bodies, and thus nothing is too big or too small for them to manipulate. Nothing is too heavy. But if we must continue to think as we normally do—that is, by what's possible for human persons in their bodies—then let's consider that the universe, very near to the moment that it was brought into being, was minuscule. It was literally subatomic in size.

"A supernatural power—yet one that's below God—could've reached out with spiritual hands and grasped such a diminutive thing, altering it according to its will. But what about

the sheer velocity of the nascent universe's expansion? Could an angel—in this case the First Creature—have had enough time to hold it, let alone alter it?

"Well, it's safe to say that time is a phenomenon of our universe as we perceive it, and thus it exists as such *within* the bounds of our temporal reality. If time exists 'on the other side', it's not like the time we're familiar with. Thus, the Enemy, as a completely spiritual being, wouldn't have been subject to the restrictions of time. The division of the cosmos didn't occur in any form of temporality as we can imagine it. Furthermore, the First Creature is in no way a physical being, and therefore isn't restricted by spatial dimensions as the human body is. Thus, the universe was never at any moment 'too big' or 'too small' for the Enemy to manipulate. Let *that* sink in."

“But then another question comes to mind. Why would God allow the cosmos to be divided, other than to appropriate one of the orphan universes as the eternal, ever-growing abode of evil? Maybe it's because it would give us an opportunity to join what was broken. Because as I said earlier, we're unifiers by nature. And so I think that either as an exceedingly advanced starfaring civilization, or as deified co-creators in eternity, we're going to undo the damage and rejoin the orphan universes to the 'mother cosmos'. However, this is with the exception of the Dark Universe, of course. And after we've accomplished such a unification, maybe we'll do the same with *spiritual* universes.

“But speaking of universes, it's possible—and I believe probable—that there are a virtual infinitude of them. And I'm talking here about universes that God created in separate acts of creation. And I believe that all of them contain intelligent life. Because it seems to me that the infinite, eternal Source of Life always and everywhere creates living things in various forms.

“And so we have two cosmic categories. In the first are the orphan universes—those that the Dragon cut away from our universe in an angry act of rebellion. And in the second, we have universes properly so-called, brought into being either by God alone, or with the participation of deified creatures.

“I believe that even the universes in the first category contain intelligent life. But then I wonder...could *our* cosmos be an orphan? If so, God would still be our universe's Creator, the One who made the whole from which a piece was broken off.

“Whatever the truth may be regarding these questions, so many thinkers, philosophers and intellectuals accord with the great mind of Aristotle, whom Saint Thomas Aquinas called 'The Philosopher'. Aristotle believed that only one universe exists. But even if he's right, it's not a contradiction to advocate the *potential*

existence of other universes 'in the future', including those co-created with God. God isn't eternally limited to one cosmos.

"While it may be true that only one universe exists *now*, others *can* exist in the eternal future. Aristotle can have his cake and eat it now. But we can have our cake and eat it later. The truth of the reality of other universes, if they don't already exist, will depend on glorified humanity's *desire* that they exist. And this desire, if powerful enough, will bring forth the reality.

"But this leads us into yet another question. Why would God—or deified individuals in participation with God—make other universes besides this one? Shouldn't the present reality be sufficient?

"In other words, if we're indeed meant to participate in the infinite creativity of God, why can't it be in the creation of planets or galaxies or clusters of galaxies? And if we're going to co-create with God new domains of existence instead of just adding content to *this* universe, will we be restricted to a certain number of such domains? Should we invoke Occam's Razor here? I believe that the answers are in each of us, but we have to dive deep to find those answers.

"God *wants us to know* what it's like to be 'creators'. To imagine and design realities. To fashion domains of existence inhabited by numberless living things. But then why not just make us designers of individual galaxies? Because in that case we wouldn't be able to say, 'I co-created a new universe'.

"We'd be co-creators not of wholes but of the parts of wholes. And by participating in creation, we live the divine life more fully. Our glory is greater. The number of our children is greater. A universe of children versus that of a galaxy or less.

"What I'm talking about are *aggregate totalities*. Our Creator wants us to be the architects of vast realities, not the parts of wholes. It's true that galaxies and clusters of galaxies are beyond vast. But so what? God wants to transform every last one of us into a co-creator of a cosmic *totality*.

"But the question remains: Will each of the deified co-create only one universe or many? Will 'creator' and 'creatrix' be limited to a single cosmos? Surely, one is more than enough.

"Because with even just one, I can truly say, 'I worked with the Maker of All to bring forth a universe of living things'. And then I can proclaim, 'Let it expand endlessly, and let new regions appear to accommodate the emergence of new life'. Since the expansion can be endless, along with the creation of new matter, more than one cosmos is unnecessary.

"But more than one universe is certainly possible. That is, if we truly desire it, God can bring any idea to fruition. God is a being of unlimited potential and infinite potency.

"But other universes *will* exist, even if ours is presently the only one. The deified, in their union with the Almighty, will bring these universes about. God would never deny anything good to the divinized, perfected creature. All that such a one has to do is *ask*, and God will do it.

"But let me be clear. I'm not talking about the creation of one universe after another, each in succession, the previous universe being dissolved before the next one is created. That was the brainchild of Origen, whom the Church condemned because, according to his thought, all things in the preceding universe are remade—one could even say 'reincarnated'—in the succeeding universe. Every universe comes into being only after the previous one is destroyed. I'm not talking about that. But I'm also not talking about a 'plurality of worlds', which was the term, I believe, that ancient philosophers used to refer to the idea of an infinite number of universes existing at one time.

"I'm referring to a *finite* number of universes co-created by the deified and that possess their existence simultaneously. However, they come into existence one or many at a time. And none of them are annihilated in the process. They don't come into being all at one time, but neither are they created only to be dissolved one after another.

"But I think that it's important to point out that personal possessiveness will have no place in the hereafter. The cosmic realities we'll co-create will belong to *all things and everything*. All creatures within all realities—excluding, of course, those in the Dark Universe—will receive every new universe as an eternal inheritance. It doesn't matter that many won't be able to do anything practical with their cosmic possessions. What matters is that each new cosmos is the inheritance of *all*.

"All that we are and all that we have belong to our God. But we possess our Creator—and everything that our Creator possesses. We possess God because God makes a gift of self to every single one of us. And since all universes exist within God's being, God's gift of self includes the *entirety of created reality*. And so God and Creation belong to each other.

"And so it follows that all creatures, regardless of their universe of origin, have a right to enter any cosmos, including our own. A deified individual may cooperate in the creation of one or more universes. But it doesn't mean that those realities would belong exclusively to him or her. The principle may or may not be new, but *all things belong to all things*.

"And so imagine the possibilities and implications here. What if our universe is inhabited, or is at least being visited by, beings from other universes? Let's suppose their existence.

"They may have entered our reality to study it, hoping to acquire knowledge and wisdom from it. Some might have escaped from a universe whose rapid expansion is leading to a cosmic 'Big Freeze', threatening to extinguish all life-forms therein. Some of the visitors may be here to impart knowledge and wisdom to one or a number of the younger races, running errands that will influence the course of events in *all realities*—in all spheres of existence.

"Considering such possibilities, we might consider just a few more. Some visitors might have entered our universe by way of advanced technology. On the other hand, they could've

traveled through a kind of 'intercosmic connector' that links our universe to theirs. When a universe is created, perhaps God links it to all other universes by way of such connectors.

"But the most wonderful possibility is that the visitors are deified beings who co-created universes with God before entering our reality. As divinized creatures, Heaven would be their true home. But at any time they can enter and dwell in *any* universe, including the universes that they designed and built with their Creator. Perhaps they've entered our universe for reasons we can't understand—at least not yet.

"But why would they need spaceships if they've been elevated into a state of theosis? Why would they need physical craft to get around if they've attained unity with God? Because maybe some of the objects that people see—often in the form of silver craft—aren't physical things but mental projections.

"Possessing exceptionally powerful mental and spiritual abilities, these ascended beings could conceivably manipulate our perception of their presence. But why would they do that? Because maybe we're naturally unable to see their true form and they want us to know they're here. They want humankind to awaken and see that the creative urge of God is infinite and therefore countless intelligent races exist, even if they originate in other existential realities.

"Since they come from Elsewhere, their real home isn't within *this* universe. But that doesn't change the fact that our universe belongs to them as much as it does to us. More than likely, they're capable of sharing it with us. But would we know how to share it with them? If they were to manifest as physical beings and approach us in an open way, would we welcome them? Maybe they've kept their distance because they realize that humans would treat them as invaders.

"You know, we still haven't figured out a way to manage our stewardship of Earth without resorting to compensation in some form. We haven't learned how to expunge greed from our

hearts. And therefore we're stuck with the necessary evil of land ownership. It's necessary because without it we'd disagree over borders and quarrel over property lines. We'd fight for new land endlessly. But just because the ownership of land is necessary, it doesn't mean that it squares with the Creator's will.

"To be able to roam the earth freely and to pursue a life of happiness thereby wasn't something we were ever meant to pay for. It wasn't supposed to be just a privilege. We've turned a reasonable life into a privilege. Why should *any* creature in *any* universe pay to occupy space in three dimensions?

"The average American may own a sliver of real estate that, relative to the surface area of the planet, is microscopic. A subatomic particle. Step outside this subatomic lot, and you have to either fork over money for the privilege—sometimes by way of taxes—or you have to get permission from the owner. Or you have to know the owner. But why should the people of a planet have to complete transactions or acquire permission just to set foot *anywhere* on their own world?

"Greed may not be the only reason we're in this sorry mess. But if we fail to overcome avarice in our relationship with the land, then how can we cohabit with alien beings? Despite our fascination with them, we'd nevertheless fight with them for space. The same as we fight with ourselves for space. And not everybody would be guilty of xenophobia, but I think that it would be an issue as well. Such things certainly wouldn't be in accord with God's will. They'd agree only with the reality we've created through greed, possessiveness and other vices.

"And theoretically speaking, we might need to defend ourselves against an alien power. But that's a hypothetical in which the aggressor hasn't realized—or rejects the truth—that all things belong to all things. But this principle has exceptions.

"Due to their violent aggression, hostile forces and evil powers own nothing of what they aspire to gain, be it nations, worlds, galaxies or even universes. They disqualify themselves

by their destructive actions. They might rule over and control peoples and planets, but they don't *own* anyone or anything."

Camillus quickly downed what was left of his afternoon coffee and continued. "But enough about co-created realities and who possesses what and why. Adam, I believe that before being allowed to participate in acts of co-creation, we'll have to clean house. Our universe has been defiled by evil.

"But as I stated earlier, God will put a final end to evil in every universe except one. A single domain will be set aside for those who want nothing to do with their Creator, a realm in which the darkness of evil will endure forever. Because that's what they'll want. They'll receive exactly what they want. In the end, God gives every creature what it truly desires.

"Good and evil will always coexist, but in the end it'll only be in existential terms. In other words, good and evil will forever exist, but at some point they'll do so separately, each in a separate reality. Eventually, a great spiritual centrifuge will be turned on. This will permanently separate evil from good.

"Hell, then, is a universe of evil, the only one of its kind. It'll expand forever as it receives new inhabitants from untold universes. As universes grow in number, so will the number of those who reject love and goodness.

"But from the perspective of *this* universe's inhabitants, Hell will freeze over one day, so to speak. That's because we'll no longer contribute numbers to it—at some time in the future. And because negative spiritual intelligences will *no longer* be able to enter our sphere of existence and operate in it.

"Our universe and the universes that we co-create with God—and the orphan universes, too—all of these, each in its own good time, will be liberated from evil. They must be. God will have it no other way.

"If creatures from other domains of existence are here, again, it could be to learn the knowledge and wisdom given to

us by the Creator. By the One who descended from the infinite heights and lived as *one of us*. The One who taught us how to live, how to engage in spiritual combat and how to walk in the ways of love so we can be happy.

"And by such knowledge and wisdom, the visitors can overcome evil in *their* universes. But if nothing else, they could be here just to say they've visited the universe—even the very world—to which the Supreme Being descended and lived a human life. If we in our devotion to God make pilgrimages to the Holy Land, is it so strange an idea that otherworldly beings might visit Earth to pay tribute to their Maker?

"But whatever reason or reasons our alien visitors have for being here, the forces of good will drive out the forces of evil in *every* universe. And with each and every victory, a great and wonderful thing will happen. The liberated cosmos will be changed suddenly, and be merged with the *Great Universe*—a supercosmos of joined universes. But these realities must be purged before they can be added to the Great Universe. Evil, and the seeds of evil, will be thrown into the never-ending fire.

"We might think of the Great Universe, or the 'Eternal Cosmos' as it might be called, as the ultimate created reality, devoid of all dark and negative things. But *our* universe isn't like that. Since it still harbors evil, it can't be absorbed into the Eternal Cosmos. Not yet, anyway.

"And one might conceive of the Eternal Cosmos as the physical dimension of Heaven. I mean, doesn't the Bible say something about how we're going to possess glorified *bodies*? Glorified bodies, although they'll be superior in every way to natural bodies, still possess a physical aspect.

"After the Resurrection, Christ sat at table with two of his disciples in the village of Emmaus and *ate bread* with them. This indicates some kind of physicality in the risen body. And if even the glorified body possesses a physical dimension, why shouldn't Heaven possess a physical dimension, too?

"I imagine that the Great Universe is the most blessed cosmos, ever-growing and ever-expanding as new universes are added to it, possessing heavenly equivalents of planets, stars, galaxies and galaxy clusters. The fabric of space isn't black but brilliant. Objects have no shadows. Tears never fall. Grief and unhappiness are literal impossibilities.

"The evils of past lives exist not even as mere memories, because we possess new, supernatural minds. In the Eternal Cosmos, all things are right and good. Everything is as it should be. In a way, everything is as it should've always been.

"This is our 'eternal future', and we have a lot of work to do as a species. But before we can finish that work, we may find it necessary to work with one or more non-human powers. Let's suppose the existence of political bodies constituted by extraterrestrial civilizations that are oriented towards the good, whose mission it is to prepare our universe for union with the Eternal Cosmos. Perhaps one day we can join such a political entity. But how would we attain an evil-free universe? Maybe it comes about in the following way.

"Imagine that in the far future, but before the universe is transformed, the human race is surpassingly advanced in technological and spiritual terms. But human nature remains in a fallen state. People can still commit sin and evil.

"And bringing the story of our universe to its final part, God puts an end to procreation. The procreative blessing from on high is withheld. Therefore, although people might engage in the reproductive act, it never bears fruit.

"Remember that Christ cursed the fig tree. He caused it to lose its fruitfulness. And that was despite the fact that the tree *wasn't in season* to produce fruit.

"God cursed such a thing even though it hadn't borne fruit before its time. Is it a stretch to imagine that the Creator would restrain the fruitfulness of humanity, especially in light of its immoral tendencies? But how would this put an end to evil?

"Such an act would cause a universal future in which newborns can't exist. All intelligent, embodied species would experience it. There'd be no new sources of freely willed moral evil. That leaves those who already exist and *their* free will. But by this time we'd have very long lifespans. Or we'd possess some kind of immortality, realized either through evolution or scientific advancement or divine grace.

"Extended lifespans, but above all immortality, give the people of the universe ample time to decide their eternal 'end state'. Some might describe this final state as the 'permanent vibration' of the soul. Many will choose the positive vibration of love. But inevitability some will choose the negative vibration of anti-love and separation from God. At some point in the future, the latter will go—freely or by force—into the reality they've gravitated towards all their lives.

"This exodus, and in many cases exile, may take long ages to play out. But the Final Battle must take place before Judgment and the subsequent separation of good and evil. You can't have a final battle on Earth against the forces of evil if they've been judged and removed from the cosmos.

"Again, all who reject God forever, human or not, will leave our universe freely or by force. And it's unfortunate that Armageddon will necessitate physical violence. But whether God's victory happens as I've speculated here, who can say? All we know for sure is that evil still abides here with us. We haven't reached the end.

"And so as I said, we still have work to do. But when the work is finished, the stage will be set. The future will open up to us like a door to tomorrow. Then God will take our universe and integrate it into the Eternal Cosmos. And if we haven't already done so, we'll begin to co-create universes. Many of them—if not all—will require redemption as ours did. That's right, Adam.

"This holds true because God wants the human race to endure forever. And it shall. Only its eternal destiny will play

out in this universe or that—forever. Our race will always exist in one form or another. In one reality or another.

"Yes, glorified humanity will always be in Heaven. But I'm talking about human races inhabiting unnumbered worlds that populate the universes we'll design and create with God. And wherever humanity exists, some will choose evil. We can't *prevent* the rise of evil within our co-creative works, although statistically a perfectly moral cosmos is inevitable in eternity.

"For creatures to freely choose good, they must be able to freely choose evil. And I know that you'd rather not resort to statistics in matters of faith, Adam. But it's statistically inevitable that a subset of creatures will choose darkness over light.

"At the very least, some will commit objective evil. Even if they lack the knowledge of good and evil, they'll eventually think, speak or act in ways that are contrary to God's plan. Thus they must be corrected or counteracted in some way.

"At least on a spiritual level. And so we can be sure that evil will appear at some point. Somehow and somewhere and somewhen, it'll materialize within each newly made universe.

"As saints deified in glory, we may have to descend into our universes to fight evil. Because maybe God won't lavish the gift of co-creation on certain souls—those that are unwilling to descend into their co-created universes to fight evil. And if that's true, then the *willingness* to engage in spiritual warfare will be a prerequisite for this gift—the same as faith in its possibility.

"One's willingness to descend into a sinful, evil world will require a steadfast heart willing to endure *many forms* of suffering and difficulty. Because suffering and difficulty are the fruits of sin and evil. Thus, the realities of sin and evil imply the necessity of work, including physical labor.

"I imagine that those willing to make the sacrifice won't be denied. In doing so, they'll revisit the reality of suffering for a time, thus following in the footsteps of Christ. But their descent won't be in the same manner as that of Christ, who did so as an

infinite Person of the Godhead. But their endeavors will mirror that of Christ in some way, because they'll temporarily vacate their high blessedness in order to embrace the unhappiness and suffering of a broken, fallen world.

"Nevertheless, I'm not implying that their sufferings and sacrifices will serve as the direct cause of the redemption and salvation of races. That was what the life and crucifixion of the Lord were for. But their work will *matter*, and in some mystical way 'fill up in their flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions', as Saint Paul wrote.

"But when the evil in a given universe has been ended, its co-creator—or its co-creators—may be allowed to decide whether to merge it into the Great Universe or to leave it as an independent domain. Some of the deified may opt for the latter arrangement. Hopefully, it'll be in such a manner as to allow for emissaries and visitors from other universes.

"Perhaps we'll be able to bestow this privilege on our cosmic children, the inhabitants of our universes. In time, they may very well tire of being closed off and long to be part of a larger reality. On the other hand, they might want to preserve the discreteness of their universe so that truly unique projects of metaphysical import may be undertaken therein.

"Even as it is now, as fallen creatures yearning for the deified state, we tend to seek for the unification of things, the joining of what hasn't been joined. This primal instinct, carried over into our eternal *supernature*, will impel many of the deified to realize unification at the earliest possible time. In doing so, our myriad co-creations will be utterly transformed. They'll be glorified into eternity as their architects were before them."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Adam was dumbstruck. He couldn't quite believe what he was hearing. It's one thing to believe that creatures in their deified state could cooperate with God in the design and creation of universes. It's quite another to imagine a grand unification of universes into a single 'Great Universe' free of evil. He could almost embrace the idea, but he saw a serious problem with it.

"Father Camillus, I usually have a very open mind, but your idea of integrating universes into some great superverse devoid of all evil is a stretch. At least for me. It's not because I doubt the ability of divinized creatures to bring such a reality about, especially given that they're one spirit with the Almighty. It's just that, according to what you have in mind, a final victory over evil within any universe, including ours, would require that God strip the conjugal act of its fruitfulness, making humanity and other intelligent species sterile as a result.

"What you basically said was that God would prevent new life. Evil wouldn't be able to manifest itself in the thoughts, words and deeds of those who would've been born otherwise. That's one half of your recipe for the extinction of evil.

"The other half consists of the divergent destiny of the universe's existing creatures. A fork would appear in the road, an intersection point of critical importance in the history of the cosmos. Some will go left. Others right. Beyond this juncture, only the good would remain in our universe.

"Those who reject goodness and light would either die off, be vanquished in some great final battle, voluntarily leave this universe or be forever exiled from it. But those who orient themselves to the good—ultimately to adore God—would be rewarded with very long lifespans, perhaps even immortality. In any case, the bad go to the same place, whatever the manner of their exit.

"But how can a good, ever-creating God impose such sterility on creatures? I can't possibly imagine that our Creator would willingly do this. It would bring entire races of intelligent creatures to the end of the line."

Camillus spoke with closed eyes, his words measured and soft. "Try to see the bigger picture here. What makes you think that such a pause in procreation would be the final end of a race? It would only be a pause.

"Imagine the following. In the eternal Mind of God, there are mental 'models' of the souls who would've been born into our world but *weren't* due to the universal and divinely-induced sterility. But in time, new universes appear. And these are the fruits of the union of God and deified creatures.

"In time, we see *unglorified* human beings emerge in each new universe, some on one planet and some on another. These are the souls who would've been born into our universe but weren't. And so the line goes on, just not here.

"Possibly, they won't possess bodies identical to those that they would've had in *this* universe. But the essence of a human being transcends visible matter. And so I think that the argument stands. The human line will continue, even with the existential pause and even with the differences in bodies.

"Our race can't be destroyed. It might be temporarily paused, but not destroyed. Because its existential Source is absolutely invincible, indestructible, infinite and eternal. We'll continue on forever, on this planet or another. In this universe or another.

"Still, we should try to save the human family living *now* on Earth. We do this by going to the stars, as you said earlier. Why let ourselves die out? Even knowing that human groups on other worlds will carry the torch whether or not we survive the Sun's death, we must try to save the human line on *this* world, regardless of our future procreative status.

"The suspension of human procreation won't prevent the subsequent placement of new souls in other universes. Thus, a procreative pause wouldn't be a permanent thing. It would be an interlude. Nothing more. God would never shut one door without opening another. The Creator and deified persons cooperating with the Creator will prove to us that there's really no such thing as extinction. Life continues on. Or it reemerges. Somewhere and somewhen. *Always*."

It was Adam's turn to play devil's advocate. "Okay. But if God can *delay* life, why can't we? Why can't human beings do the same thing? After all, by using birth control, we prevent new life from coming into the world *now*. However, God would be able to create those souls—those that *would've* been born in the absence of birth control—and embody them on Earth in the future. Or somewhere else. What do you say about that?"

"Well, I believe we should consider the possibility that, in utilizing birth control, we're making a Creator-level decision. The decision to prevent or delay life is perfectly wise only when it's made by the unlimited mind of God and not by creatures. To redirect a soul into another place or time is a very high-level call. The highest, actually.

"But we've been endowed with free will. And so on a purely practical level, we're certainly able to act in ways that parallel God's authority. But the *practicality* of our actions isn't what's in question. It's the *wisdom* of those actions.

"What if God's intention is to create a specific soul for a specific body at a specific point in time? Furthermore, what if that specific body never begins to form in the womb as a result of contraception? When fertilization is forestalled, it seems that God is left with four choices.

"The unborn soul that God wants to join to a specific body at a specific time might *later* receive the very body it was

originally meant to possess. This is possible only if the couple subsequently opens their hearts to the fruit of procreation. But in this scenario, the problem is that the postponement might make it impossible for the child to accomplish—at the time it's supposed to be accomplished—the work for which he or she was made by God. Late isn't always better than never.

"The second option available to God is to join the soul to a *different* body, one procreated by a couple whose hearts are open to new life. But we could say that when God creates a human soul, that soul is 'custom made' for a specific body. If God creates a soul meant for a specific body but then later joins that soul to a *different* body, plans are altered. Such an act might negatively affect the soul, and that's because its natural 'spiritual vibration' might not jibe with the physiological characteristics—and thus the genetic constitution—of the substitute body. In very crude and simple terms, we could say that souls are made for bodies, not bodies for souls.

"But it's even conceivable, if not actually practical, that a soul's 'surrogate parents'—a couple open to procreation—could be non-human in origin, assumably from another world. But here the issue is 'where', not 'when', the soul is embodied. Originally meant to be a human on Earth, maybe the soul can become a member of a non-human race on another planet. Or a member of an *extraterrestrial human* race. But again, what if God desires that the soul accomplish something *on Earth*? If so, an otherworldly birth forces a change in God's plans.

"Third, one might hypothesize that God can create the individual soul so that it would exist from the very beginning in a bodiless state of being, its intellect fully formed, existing as an intangible and rational spiritual entity. But human nature is at least partially defined by the physical body. Why would God want to alter that definition, even if on an individual basis?

"Finally, God could acquiesce and not create the soul at all, therefore withholding the very existence of the individual.

In three of the scenarios, the decisions of creatures force God to modify—and in one case abandon—the divine plan. As I see it, we shouldn't be so bold as to impose on God like this.

"But once again, in purely practical terms, we're able to deny God in this manner. We all possess the gift of free will, and therefore let us exercise it. However, the free exercise of one's will doesn't necessarily mean that it's in accord with the designs of the Giver of Life.

"But I've said enough about contraception. Going back to the idea of souls being born into other universes...humanity will persist. Its numbers will increase forever. The worlds we inhabit will be myriad. The same goes for non-human species.

"The argument may surface that a deified human being wouldn't be able to co-create *non-human* life because, as a tree produces fruit only of its own kind, so we'd produce fruit only of our kind. But the human being in glory will be united to *God*. And God is infinite in nature and essence, able to create entities of *any* kind. Thus, the Creator would be the first and highest principle of non-human life in every act of co-creation.

"The point is that those births which were prevented in this universe by divine fiat can take place in another universe. Such a universe could be the co-creation of a deified human being. But we could also propose that it could be the work of one or more deified *non-humans* in cooperation with God.

"Remember that God said to us, '*Ye are gods*.' I think these words could be meant for non-human beings also. If the truth is that humans are gods, it doesn't negate the truth that intelligent extraterrestrials would be gods as well.

"Anyhow, if at some point in our universe all human and non-human births are redirected into *another* universe, it would allow our reality to reach its culmination. A final battle between good and evil would settle everything once and for all. It would determine who gets to stay in this universe and who goes. And whoever stays gets to turn the lights off, so to speak.

"After the last battle, only the good will remain. And if they're not immortal by this time, or possess greatly extended lifespans, perhaps they'll receive one of these gifts from God. I imagine that they'll celebrate exorbitantly, and that their peace will be inviolable.

"But when the celebrations are over, and when enough time has passed, even these blessed immortals will turn their eyes to Heaven and petition the eternal Maker to bring them all to an even happier existence. They'll dream of a virgin realm in which indescribable wonders await, wonders not found even in a universe wherein evil, having existed at one time, has been driven out. They'll desire the integration of their universe into the Eternal Cosmos. Into that perfected reality, blessed in all possible ways. A universe with wonders so sublime that, even as deified saints in glory, we'll never fully understand them."

“That could be how our universe comes to be integrated into the Great Universe. But I dare say that our universe isn't a co-created one. At least it wasn't co-created by any creature. But before a co-created cosmos can be assimilated into the Great Universe, its deified architects will have to reenter the reality of suffering for a time. And this will be for the sake of their cosmic children—human and non-human—who'll be born into those realities. But the deified individual who rejects a second life of suffering will not see his or her designs brought to life.

“If after this earthly life our rejection of suffering is final, we'd refuse to descend into our co-creations and counter the evil therein. Because fighting against evil entails hardship. And if we aren't willing to do this ourselves, how can we ask others to do it? To me, that would be the ultimate hypocrisy.

“That's why we should embrace the crosses of life. The Lord Jesus Christ told us to take up our cross daily and to follow Him. But to embrace suffering doesn't mean that it should be forced on anybody. Or that we should convert ourselves into modern flagellants who whip themselves in extreme penance.

“But we can willingly impose a modest and reasonable suffering on ourselves as a spiritual offering. When we offer up the unpleasant things of life to God, they're transformed into grace for the spiritual benefit of others. In this sense we live for others, and for God above all, when we embrace suffering and turn it into a spiritual offering.

But why do evil and suffering even exist? I mean, if they *didn't* exist, nobody would have crosses to bear. We wouldn't need to endure personal sacrifices for the spiritual good of all.

“As I see it, one reason for allowing evil to exist would be to take advantage of its sufferings, which serve as catalysts for a healthy detachment from the world. It's in our nature to be

attached to the things around us—to what we see, feel, taste, et cetera. Naturally, we cling to sense pleasure.

"If we're attached to the physical delights of the world, then we'll never *want* the most sublime delights. And God will never compel us to accept what we don't want. When we're *attached* to the objects and pleasures of the world, how can we *want* Heaven? We can only want the ultimate reality by not being attached to the present one. And so we often have to be jolted out of our attachment to the things of the world.

"On a certain level, our senses are our worst enemies. In allowing the world to taint itself with evil and suffering, God in a certain way launches an assault on the desirability of it all. Because suffering is the result of evil. But we're hard-wired to recoil from suffering. And an ample measure of it reduces our individual desire to linger in this 'vale of tears'. And that opens up our hearts to the desire for a world without tears.

"Some suffering comes to us from the exterior world. But we can embrace this suffering as far as possible—for the spiritual benefit of others. And some suffering we willingly add to our lives for the same benefit.

"In either case, we embrace the suffering to offer it up to God for the spiritual good of the world. Fasting, penance, hard labor, abstinence, poverty and discomfort: there are countless ways we can lessen the impact of—or even eliminate entirely—the suffering of others. They're acts of charity, because they're born for the good of our brothers and sisters.

"In reality, they're endured for God's sake *and* theirs. For love's sake. And they're voluntary acts. At least they *can* be voluntary acts. By changing our attitude about involuntary sufferings, we can transform them into voluntary ones.

"To obey the commandments of God is to embrace life's trials and tribulations. Christ is the Logos, and the Logos is God. And the Logos, while in the flesh, commanded us to take up our crosses and follow Him. The truth is that only in this obedience

will we find the ultimate fulfillment of who we are as a creative and procreative species. Obedience is the key.

"So many good things are possible only in obedience. It truly is the substance of unity. Especially in wedlock. Without it, the marriage will suffer and eventually fall to pieces. Can the husband obey his wife while simultaneously exercising the final authority as head of the family? He can and must.

"A king doesn't have to exercise the final decision in everything. He can yield to the wishes of his queen, even in the most vital matters. In fact, I'd say that a king will often find that *he has no choice* but to indulge his queen in many things.

"He has the final authority and is 'lord of the kingdom'. And yet he should often bow to his queen's decisions when prudence requires it, kissing her feet as he subjects himself to her. The point is that when mutual obedience exists between husband and wife, a deeper harmony abounds.

"And it's good when children obey their parents. A girl or a boy who tends to disobey will probably grow up into a life of tragedy. When obedience prevails within the family, Heaven comes down and the family is one in peace.

"The arm, when raised, obeys the mind. Naturally, the arm is one with the body. But in obeying the commands of the mind, it becomes one with the body on a higher level.

"The monk obeys the abbot of the monastery, as well as the monks with seniority in the house. The monastic call to obedience is an ancient one, and it's a symbol of the body's subjection to the mind. The monk practices obedience so that in the life to come he'll be but one part of that everlasting body of which Christ is the head and which is prefigured in the Body of Christ on Earth.

"The players on a ball team obey their coach. Soldiers obey their superior officers. Employees obey their immediate supervisors and the higher bosses. Unity and harmony require obedience. It's a universal necessity. No one is exempt from it.

"Therefore, if there's anything that makes the unity of living things possible, whether in this world or any other, it's obedience. When this holy virtue isn't oriented above all to God, chaos, disharmony and narcissism abound. The self and its desires are idolized. Countless agendas are born—on Earth and on myriad worlds—none of which give due consideration to God's plan. Each of them is anathema to all the others.

"In this way, division grips the world. And everywhere conflict and contention arise. In a word, chaos. This is a world and a universe in which 'My agenda is right and true, and all the rest are either wrong, irrelevant or of no importance'.

"Ultimately, obedience to God has to exist everywhere among creatures, even within circles of worldly power. When necessity requires it, God has ways of compelling the powers that be into right action—those who too often aren't interested in obedience unless it's to the ruler of this world. But despite their intentions and very best efforts, the overall trend of their actions does incline towards the spiritual interests of God's people. But it doesn't mean that their intentions are right. They *do* cause suffering. And everyone pays for it.

"In light of this fact, blind obedience to those in power is usually not a good thing. Governments and institutions can be corrupted or infiltrated, right down to the very individuals in power. But our God and Creator endowed us with a plethora of inner gifts. One must employ these inner gifts, which include reason, insight, intuition, discretion, conscience and wisdom, to get a clear picture of things when the inner voice says that something's wrong.

"The virtue of obedience isn't a very popular one in the world. Collectively, as an intelligent and moral species, we've forsaken the pursuit of virtue and enlightenment for everything that can advance us mentally, physically and technologically. But what about the realities of the spirit? Where's the desire to put spiritual ascension above everything else? We don't have

to abandon the 'everything else'. But we also shouldn't place it above the life of the spirit.

"We're on a ship that needs to be righted. *Quickly*. The Christian civilization we once had is moving towards oblivion. That's no exaggeration. But at the same time, even though it's heading in that direction, it'll never actually arrive there.

"The armies of light have the Almighty within them, and so they're going to be the ones who rescue it from destruction. They're going to preserve it by grace—with God, through God and in God—because it's that important. The existence of the Faith is a necessity. And so the ship will be righted. It's only a matter of when. And how."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Camillus exhaled a protracted sigh as he looked tiredly at his watch. “Well, it's getting late in the day. I wish we could spend every Sunday like this. But I think you have the answers you came here to find. Don't *you*, Adam?”

“Maybe just the beginning of those answers. I need to mull over everything and allow it to percolate for a good while. There's so much to take in.”

“Yes, it's a lot to absorb. But keep in mind that much of what we talked about is speculative. Well, speculative to those who haven't embraced the truth that God can bring about *any* reality. And highly 'speculative' is the idea of the unification of individual universes into a grand supercosmos.

“But co-creation and your Dream—I'll accept neither of these as mere speculation. In any way, shape or form. And co-creation may not materialize as a procreative act, but its future reality is certain—in one form or another. We can't scientifically prove such realities. And yet *they are* truths. Unprovable ones.

“Because how does anyone acquire the evidence, and thereby arrive at some kind of proof, for the existence of non-physical and extratemporal realities? How do you obtain proof of dreams and spiritual visions you received? You don't.

“These are truths and realities that lie outside the three divisions of time: past, present and future. Their existence will depend on conditions. But the conditions will be fulfilled.

“Still, one has to believe in them first. Inevitably, some souls won't believe until they see these wonders realized in the life to come. In any case, faith in these realities in some form, whether such faith comes about in this life or the next, will be necessary for their realization. But untold numbers of souls *will*

believe. And by embracing these beliefs, they open the door to impossible worlds. I think we both agree on this."

"Yes, we do. But to me, the Dream isn't mere belief. It's not something that I 'hope' will come true. I consider it a reality that's sure to come. But I embrace your private revelation with as much certainty, Father. And I hold to be true what you said about God's love for the soul. As you described it, the nature of this embrace is supernaturally erotic. Too many mystics and saints describe it in those terms for it *not* to be so."

Adam rose slowly from his chair with a deep exhalation. "I just have to get far away from everything to process all this. I've had enough of the world and its ways. I'm tired of its noise, its apathy, its avarice and its dog-eat-dog mindset.

"For far too long, I've wanted to get away to a desolate place where I can be alone. I just haven't actually done it. This desire doesn't come from hatred of other people. It's because I'm a hermit by nature and need all the silence and solitude I can get, especially now that I'm in the last half of my journey. I just need time for all of this to marinate.

"At least a year in total isolation—in perfect solitude. A sabbatical of epic proportions. Now *that's* what the doctor ordered. But who knows where I'll go?

"Maybe the outskirts of a town in the Atacama Desert. Or a lonely island somewhere. Or far out at sea, hundreds of miles from shore. I just need some place away from the grind."

While looking up at the ceiling, Adam's eyes widened in excitement. "My God, that's *right*. Okay...I think I know just the spot. Back home, there's a long stretch of almost untouched coastline. We used to stay at a cabin right on the water.

"It belonged to an uncle of one of my childhood friends, but I don't know if he still owns it. I haven't been out there since junior high. It's in a remote and mostly undeveloped area.

"The only soul that you'll see out there is the infrequent angler in the distance. On any given day, you might see a handful of fishing boats, and maybe a single barge lumbering along. It's Heaven on Earth. And all you can hear is the wind, mixed with the cry of gulls and the sound of wavelets lapping against the boat. Looking out on the face of the waterway, you see the infinite scintillations made by the morning sun. I think it's about time I give my old friend a call.

"Even if the cabin doesn't work out, I'll find me a good guide and make a camping trip out of it. And the perfect time will be when a cool front comes in. When the humidity is low, the temperature is about sixty-five degrees and the sky is a deep blue. Postcard weather.

"But the truth be told, it's really about the spirit of the place. It doesn't compete with so many locations in the world in terms of physical beauty. But there's a spirit there, a feeling I can't put into words, an allure found nowhere else on Earth. A unique peace that penetrates your deepest self. A beauty the world will never be able to see. So many memories are coming back. I need to get back there. *Posthaste*."

"It sounds like I'd love it. So where is this place? You know Adam, you've never told me where home is. Maybe one of these days I can visit?"

Adam couldn't help but smirk. "Well, alright. I'll give you a hint. It's where the Desert Southwest meets the Atlantic."

"Oh...I see. Must be Arizona. I seem to remember an old country song saying something about oceanfront property out there." Adam checked his watch with a chuckle.

"I pray that your sabbatical is relaxing and fruitful. And I pray that you go and come without incident. And speaking of prayer, let's offer one up before you head back to your room."

After bowing their heads, Camillus addressed God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity. “Eternal Father, we offer this prayer to you in the name of your only Son, Jesus Christ. We lift this prayer up to you, believing that it'll be granted. In your Son's name, we ask that it be granted.

“We pray for all good things, Almighty Father. We pray that you turn every evil in the world into something good. For the homeless person with nowhere to go—in driving rains, in freezing weather, in the cruel sun of summer. For the hungry and destitute, that their needs be met and that they receive overwhelming abundance in their lives.

“For the orphans of the world, but also for children and young adults who have only one parent, and for those whose parents are derelict in their duties—that the Light of Christ fill their hearts, minds and souls. That they come to know only joy and happiness in this life and in the life to come. That the Lord shine His face on them and be gracious to them. That the Lord turn His face to them and give them peace. That their hurts be healed, that their needs be met and that they be saved forever.

“For the protection of all children and adolescents, that the Shield of the Almighty be around them, at every moment, to protect them against every evil. For the sick and for all who suffer from disease. That Christ the Healer lay His hands upon them and heal them.

“For the conversion of sinners and for the liberation of the possessed. For the thieves, murderers, rapists, pedophiles and child abductors of the world, that they shed copious tears of contrition. That having atoned they may be saved forever.

“For all the Christians in the world, disciples of the Way, that they may ever grow in holiness. That all of the unbelievers on Earth may believe. For the conversion of the agnostic and for the conversion of the atheist. For the conversion of those who worship evil. That they, having denied their former master, may become children of the light forever.

"For the unborn in their mothers' wombs. That they be welcomed, without exception, into the world with joy. That they realize their destinies as cosmic architects. May they become the co-creators of universes, exalted forever.

"For the whole Christian Body, that we may again be of *one* Faith and *one* flock under the Lord. That no Christian be divided from another with respect to the teachings, truths and practices given to us by the Lord. That we all come to believe what God wants us to believe, and to worship as God wants us to worship.

"That, according to the truth and nothing but the truth, we may believe, pray, worship and live our lives. For the end of corruption and sinful practices within the Church and within all Christendom. For an end to the unspeakable errors of clerics. For an end to liturgical abuse and scandal. That all evils within Christendom be driven out forever.

"And for the Dream: the salvation of every person born during our lifetimes. That all individuals—no matter the wrongs they've committed—be wholly and forever changed into what God wants them to be. That they embrace the Way of Truth and convert in mind and heart. And for the weak of faith, those on the periphery, the outcast, the downtrodden and those who believe they have no place in the world. That they may come to know that they are loved and that they are precious and that their souls are treasures of unlimited worth.

"That we all be saved forever, enter eternal glory and become divine—not in nature, but in and through our adoption into the divine life, one spirit with our God forever. For this, the ultimate apotheosis, we pray. Amen."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

“Amen”. Looking downward, Adam raised his face to Camillus, his eyes watery and red from emotion. He made a promise to himself that he'd offer this prayer every day as long as he lived. “Father, do you think you can write that prayer down for me?”

“Certainly. I think I can manage a close paraphrase at least. It looks like it really moved you.”

“It's perfect. I plan on making it part of my daily routine. It said *everything*. It crystallized everything that I've wanted to say to God for so long now. Thank you for saying it.”

“What if I type it up, print it out and then send it to you? If you want, I can laminate it. Or I can frame it so you can hang it somewhere in your sanctum. Give me a mailing address and I'll make it happen. How does that sound?”

“Perfect! I'll take it framed. I think I'll hang it on the wall in front of my *prie dieu*.”

Camillus looked again at his watch and tapped it with his index finger, pointing to the time. “We have a little more than an hour to get ready for Vespers. You need to head over to your room, and I need to do some silent prayer. I'll see you in the morning at breakfast. Afterwards, you can help me for a couple of hours in the vineyard before Brother Jonas takes you to the airport.”

“Sounds good, Father. Thank you for your time today. I really needed this, you know. I'll do my best to make it back up as soon as I can. Another Sunday like this would be nice.”

"Oh, it sure would. God willing, I'll still be here the next time you get around to it. Maybe by then you'll be living the life that God's calling you to. And you know what that is. You *know* what you have to do. Do it. *Do it*. Now get going young man." With unexpected joy, Father put his hands on Adam's shoulders. "Peace be with you, Adam, the light of the world."

"And with you, Father, light of the world!"

As Adam closed the front door and turned to take the long and rocky trail back to the guesthouse, he glanced up at the blazing summer sun over the monastery's cattle pastures. Standing for a moment, he had the strangest feeling. As if this would be the last time he'd ever visit the brothers.

Suddenly, the six o'clock bell rang out at the abbey. His trance broken, Adam stepped onto the tree-dimmed path and made a beeline to his room. He had to get to the guesthouse, take a shower, sit down for a little *Lectio Divina* then make for the monastery proper. Evening Prayer was only an hour away.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The next morning, Adam spent a few hours in the vineyard with Father Camillus and a chatty, anxious crew of candidates and novices. Afterwards, he bid farewell to the group and then headed back to the solitude of his room. After a quick shower, he packed the last of his things and waited for Brother Jonas to pick him up. "*I just can't shake this feeling*," he thought. "*Why do I feel like I'll never see this place again*?"

On the plane trip back home, all he could do was peer through the window at menageries of clouds, musing on things most would probably consider esoteric. But if some knowledge *is* esoteric, could it be because God keeps it from the world until just the right moment? As Ecclesiastes tells us, everything below Heaven has its time. Yet, when such knowledge finally does enter the public consciousness, some tend to label it 'esoteric' or 'arcane'. Often it's rejected. At least it's doubted.

Some personal visions and interior locutions can be—even in the present day—legitimate sources of revelation, and, when properly scrutinized by rightful authority, are by degrees accepted by ever-growing numbers of seekers and believers. But absent an official examination, one can only take a giant leap of faith in a private revelation. It hasn't the advantage of ecclesiastical allowance, resting entirely on faith.

But faith, as an effect, is often born from intuition, that 'third eye', which enables one to see the truth of things without the exercise of reason. In any case, whether or not the proper religious authority is able to examine a private revelation from God, it inevitably comes to us. Albeit on God's schedule.

Adam had time to reflect on Father's revelation and on everything they'd talked about. His calling was clear now, and he could no longer delay. He had a responsibility to live out his vocation, and he intended to do just that. A final decision was

before him. A great deal of work was left undone in his spiritual life. He needed to make up for a lot of lost time. When he got back home, he hit the ground running and never looked back.

Over the years, Adam and Camillus kept in touch by email. Then one day a letter came in for Camillus. Adam wrote to invite Father to visit him at the cabin. Maybe for a few days. Perhaps a week or so.

Camillus declined, saying that he was on a temporary reassignment by the abbot. It was to a nearby parish that had lost its longtime pastor. The bishop had asked the abbot if the monastery could spare one of the ordained monks to serve as a temporary stand-in, and the abbot acceded. And so the old man didn't have time to visit, as his new duties prevented it. Adam replied with understanding, saying that the invitation would remain indefinitely.

Years went by before Camillus wrote with the news that he could finally fly in and visit for a few days. His assignment with the parish was complete, and the lazy days of summer were just around the corner, affording him more time for leave and leisure. The reply came a month later, which seemed like an eternity to Camillus. He wondered about Adam's delay. But after some back and forth, they agreed on a late summer visit.

The day of the trip arrived soon enough. Camillus woke early and drove to the airport alone. It was a relatively short flight south to Adam's sleepy hometown by the sea. Soon after he arrived, he found a guide familiar with the remote location, which, practically speaking, was accessible only by watercraft.

The choppy waters made for a long and uncomfortable trip. With every wave the boat crashed violently—despite the best efforts of the captain to smooth the ride. But at last they reached their destination, arriving at the cabin around noon. Disembarking with his suitcase, Camillus waved goodbye to the captain, who would return in a few days for the trip back.

He crossed the rickety pier and knocked on the front door. And as he patted his sea-sprayed body with a towel, he waited. After the third try, he called out. “Adam, I'm here! Is this any way to greet an old friend!” But he was met only by silence. Turning the knob, Camillus found the door unlocked. He rolled his suitcase inside and retracted the handle.

Adam was nowhere to be found. The back door was wide open, creaking in the wind. But as he walked over to the kitchen table, he saw a letter:

Dear Father Camillus,

> This will be most inconvenient for you right now, but for reasons that I can't divulge, I must go away...forever. I was told to leave this note for you, and that you'd manage to make it back to the monastery without issue.
>
> You have all the accommodations you'll need here. I encourage you to stay. Father, here's your chance to enjoy perfect solitude for a few days. You don't get that every day. Not even at the abbey.
>
> Take the Dream and make it your own. Don't doubt that it'll come true. Tell the others that I'm going to where I'd much rather be. After half a lifetime, my life as a single creature is at an end. *Self and other*. The salvation of all is within you, not merely as a hopeful prayer but as a truth that will surely be.
>
> Labor for the deification of everyone. This, of course, implies their conversion and salvation. Isn't this what we're really after?

> Isn't this the reality we're trying to help bring about by the grace of God? As laypeople, as clergy and as religious men and women, isn't this the substance of our *mission*?
>
> Theosis. A God-given godhood for every man, woman and child on Earth. May it be so. Amen.

On the backside of the note was a short, cryptic poem from the album *Ah Vía Musícom*, by the guitarist Eric Johnson. Below it were the words, "Eric's *three keys* poem." Camillus read it but couldn't figure it out. Why a guitarist's poem? Why did Adam write it down on the back of the note?

Suddenly, Camillus felt a surge of emotion within him. His watery eyes betrayed a welling-up of feeling from deep in his heart. He didn't know whether his former pupil was going into self-imposed exile for the rest of his life, or whether Adam knew that it was his time. Something told him it was the latter. He placed the letter back on the table and wept.

Over the next several days, while he made his spiritual retreat at the cabin, Camillus kept thinking about a passage from Genesis. He knew the words by heart. Bible in hand, he'd often spend half an hour or more meditating and praying on them, searching for their meaning.

And after years of laboring for a true understanding of the words, Camillus finally settled on an interpretation. For the one who loves and desires God enough, and whose life comes close enough to what God really wants, there is *no death* of the body. God takes such a one, body and soul, into Heaven.

To "walk with God" means to be on the most intimate terms with one's Creator, to have in the Almighty one's best friend and infinitely more. And to have God as one's best friend brings extraordinary favor. Was Adam about to receive such a rare and wonderful gift?

Camillus remembered what his favorite pastor had told him once. He said that some individuals are reserved for God alone, and so they experience poor luck—or no luck at all—in matters of the heart. This was Adam, he thought.

Was Adam about to live out the words of the passage, words that pertained to maybe a handful of persons in history? That couldn't be, he thought. The idea was preposterous. The hermit monk pulled out his Bible and read the words yet again, maybe for the ten-thousandth time:

And Enoch walked with God,
and then he was no more,
for God took him.

SPECULATIONS ON THE CHRISTIAN ESCHATON

The following is a propositional order of events and realities of the Christian eschaton. The intent isn't to provide a timeline of dates, but rather to present for consideration a big picture of "the last days" and what lies beyond. Most of what follows is speculative and is in no way authoritative.

1. In the distant future, but before the Second Coming of Christ the Lord, human beings on Earth—and conceivably humans on other worlds—possess a natural but *limited* form of immortality. Life can continue indefinitely barring illness, disease and injury. Thus, "conditional immortality".

2. This is made possible by a change in the nature of the universe. Its essence, appearance and form are altered by God. In this change, which might be called the 'First Cosmic Transformation', all substances are altered, including the matter of human and non-human bodies. This isn't yet the resurrection of the dead, which happens later. Conceivably, this cosmic alteration causes many non-human species in the cosmos to acquire conditional immortality.

This change, which alters even the natural, physical laws, is a step closer to the final end state of the universe. The ultimate nature of the cosmos, and that of physical bodies, is such that the resurrected body, whether it be glorified or condemned, will possess *absolute* and *true* immortality, and thus absolute indestructibility.

But true, absolute immortality comes later, at or near the time of the Judgment. The First Cosmic Transformation is

preparatory, and thus to bring about *true and absolute* immortality in bodies, God must add a finishing touch to the cosmos, a 'Second Cosmic Transformation', in which everything assumes its eternal form. The integration of our cosmos into the Great Universe is then made possible.

3. The Return of Christ in Glory, the Final Battle and the General Judgment occur at a point in time when, although far advanced technologically, humanity has yet to evolve into an intangible nature, or one that can transition between physical and non-physical forms. Such a lofty nature would eliminate the need to use technology out of necessity or comfort. The First Cosmic Transformation occurs before Christ's return, but it gives no creature absolute immortality. It would make possible only conditional immortality. This holds true not only for a humanity interspersed throughout the cosmos but also for all intelligent races. But conditional immortality might be a divine *imposition*, imposed through the First Cosmic Transformation, and thus not the product of evolution or science. Thus, all creatures, from the lowest to the highest, may be forced into conditional immortality.

4. The Final Battle of Armageddon takes place. Possibly, this involves not only human beings on Earth, together with God and the angelic powers, but also human races from the stars and other otherworldly forces. Revelation neither explicitly nor implicitly limits who or what participates in this battle. Thus, Armageddon may not be a conflict limited in scope to Earth and its intelligent life. It could very well be *the universe's* final battle between good and evil.

But a final battle presupposes a war. And so it follows that if extraterrestrial races participate in Armageddon, we can safely assume their involvement, from the beginning, in a

very ancient cosmic war. This war might be almost as old as the universe itself.

5. With regard to a humankind on Earth, the bodies of the dead are raised, and those of the living receive absolute immortality, either at the Judgment or immediately before. But Armageddon must take place before this change *and* before Judgment. Because indestructible bodies, whether good or bad, can't be destroyed in a battle, and because the element of evil on Earth can't participate in the Last Battle having been previously judged and sentenced. And so the Judgment is a post-Armageddon reality.

The Final Battle enables the evil powers to commit their final and greatest evil: warring directly against the Creator. Thus, when God judges them, individually and collectively, it'll be with a complete catalog of their sins and thus with a right and true basis by which to judge. This wouldn't be the case if, at a later time, the evil powers went on to commit even greater evils, or any evils for that matter.

6. Humankind realizes its final destiny, which is twofold. The good ascend into eternal glory and the wonders found only there. On the other hand, the condemned fall into an inescapable abyss of unending darkness and misery. Both the good and the bad possess indestructible bodies that are absolutely immortal in nature.

The difference between the two is that the bodies of the saints will be transcendentally sublime in their beauty and glory, able to do and produce almost anything. The bodies of the lost souls will be hideous, deformed, detestable and fruitless, qualities freely chosen by those inhabiting such bodies. The saints, as deified human persons who possess

deified bodies, will form one spirit with God, which means being one with God on a mystical level. The saints will co-create universes with their Creator, and each will be free to participate in the creation of at least one universe. Some of their designs might be for *spiritual* universes that are wholly non-physical in substance and nature. Also, it might be possible that realities which consist neither of matter nor energy *nor spirit* will be brought forth by the Creator in cooperation with the most lofty creatures, especially She who is the highest thereof. These universes would be the most exotic, unimaginable to the human mind as it is now.

The glorified saints will descend into their cosmic works, but also they will visit and perform labor in universes co-created by all kinds of deified beings. This will be to shepherd young races—and civilizations adolescent in their development. In this way, the human saints will be like the angels, who are the oldest of the oldest creatures. We should note that the saints will only be somewhat *like* the angels in various ways, because in eternity human beings will engage in acts of co-creation, whereas angels participate in no acts of any such kind, at least according to known tradition.

7. The merging of our universe into the Great Universe will commence. By this time, the cosmos, due to the Second Cosmic Transformation, will have become a reality made of refined, perfected substances and energies. The 'stuff' of which our universe is made will have been glorified to fitly serve as an addition to the Eternal Cosmos, which is itself devoid of the imperfections and evils found in lower realities.

After the Judgment but before unification, it's possible that eons and epochs will pass in our cosmos. During this time, perhaps human populations on other worlds will require

and gain redemption, endure a Final Battle between good and evil on their worlds, and experience their own Second Coming and final Judgment. The same may be true for some, even all, non-human extraterrestrial races.

However, the redemption of worlds, and their Final Battles and Judgments, would probably require that the bodies of otherworlders, both the good and bad, remain *destructible* until sometime before—or at—the Judgment of each race. This implies not a *single* cosmic alteration but a number of localized transformations. This means that extraterrestrial bodies would possess no absolute immortality until *after* the Final Battle on their respective worlds, at the earliest.

And so, if at the Resurrection *on Earth* God transforms all bodies into vessels of indestructibility, we may find that an immense number of worlds have *yet* to undergo this same transformation of matter and energy. Thus it follows that Cosmic Transformations can occur in *phases*—in different places and at different times in the universe.

Whatever the truth may be, the final destiny of every race will be made manifest at the time of Unification. That is, the unification of our universe and the Eternal Cosmos. Every race will arrive, at or prior to this moment, at its permanent "end state". However, races which require no redemption will not suffer the loss of even one soul. These races, to a person, will be suddenly elevated into the Great Universe, but without the Beatific Vision of God. Their bliss will be a natural one relative to that of the saints, but supernatural relative to the primal bliss of Adam and Eve. Even so, by an extraordinary grace of God the Creator, they'll transcend the mere *ability* to do no evil. Previously able to commit no evil, they'll be preternaturally *unable* to commit evil.

8. The Great Universe grows forever in both animate and inanimate content. As universes are created, the intelligent life that they contain will diverge into the positively and negatively oriented. Thus, a virtual infinitude of human and non-human persons will have to decide on an eternal end state. Such final decisions will determine their permanent eternal habitation. Also, in addition to beings from any number of realities, the Great Universe will receive at least some of the inanimate content (galaxies, stars, planets, et cetera) from an indefinite number of universes. In this way, the Eternal Cosmos will gain new wonders without end.

In our universe, some races may need no redemption, and yet they have a place within the Great Universe. The same would be true for such life in other cosmic domains.

The eternal abode of the godless—the "Dark Universe"—will grow forever as well, as myriad creatures from myriad universes make final, eternal decisions to forsake truth and goodness. However, in order to accommodate the growing ranks of negatively oriented creatures, the Dark Universe must forever expand in some manner. The human souls therein, if not the reprobate angels, will possess dead and lifeless bodies in accordance with their spiritual condition.

Therefore, Hell must grow not only in terms of the numbers of souls and spirits dwelling within it, but also in terms of the amount of inanimate matter it must contain. We might posit that certain quantities of "dark matter" from myriad universes would be transferred into the Dark Universe so that the physical bodies of the lost might have a physical dimension in which to exist. As the Dark Universe grows in size, its population and the quantity of inanimate matter within it will increase as well.

9. Possibly, a higher reality than the creation of universes awaits the blessed in Heaven. Although God is the ultimate reality, there may exist an unimaginable reality below God but superior to the Great Universe. If such a thing *doesn't* exist, it can be made by God, who'd give it as a gift to the deified. At present, we can't begin to imagine its nature.

We can imagine universes; we can imagine how we can play a part in the creation of universes; we can hold within our minds the idea of a perfect "supercosmos", free of evil and composed of myriad universes glorified to perfection. But since so many things *already* lie beyond our ability to imagine, we wouldn't be unjustified in positing an entity even higher on the metaphysical scale than a universe.

POSTSCRIPT

The content of this book, whether in whole or in part, may not be appropriated for the purpose of establishing a religion or any branch, denomination, sect or cult thereof. The author strongly admonishes those who would do so to reflect on the religious divisions in the world. Enough disagreement now exists without the waters being muddied further still. In the beginning, at the creation of our race, we possessed the whole, unsullied truth about ourselves, the universe and God. Truth was monolithic.

But now that the truth has been divided, the 'pieces' have become religions with their own names. The pieces are often divided into smaller pieces with *their* own names, and so on. If the division continues indefinitely, how does one begin to set out on a spiritual journey to discover the truth about God and everything else? Finding the right and true path becomes more and more difficult with every increase in the number of belief systems. Confusion abounds, and it's easy to get lost.

Many paths lead to the Truth, but there's only one True Path. This is to say that there *is* a true religion. Even so, the true religion can't provide all knowledge. It doesn't have all the answers. It can't even ask all the necessary questions.

Christ told his disciples that he had much more to tell them, but that the burden would've been too much for them. Who can possess a perfect and complete knowledge of God and of Creation? Who can claim to know all things?

The author certainly can't, and doesn't claim to be any sort of prophet. The central message of this book isn't one of prophecy. It makes not a single demand on God's behalf, and it reveals no guaranteed future realities previously unknown.

It presents potentialities that God wants us to be aware of—possibilities which can become actualities with sufficient faith and desire on our part. The message isn't one of, “This is

what's going to happen, because God has declared that it shall be." Rather, the message here is, "This is how it can possibly be because God can make it happen."

Let the truths, ideas and possibilities contained in this work be considered apart from all religious partisanship, and let them play not the smallest part in the establishment of any religion, religious community or secret society. Let there be no place for them at all, neither in the world of politics nor in the agendas and machinations of global powers. May they never be twisted to advocate dark, perverted or immoral practices, or to formulate teachings that are contrary to the natural law of the Creator. Furthermore, let no person, group or entity distort the content, or any part thereof, to sow confusion or generate discord. In short, let no creature take anything from this work in order to serve evil purposes or agendas. And if anyone uses anything from this book to assume the place of a prophet or messianic figure, or to *lay claim* to being the Messiah of whose Second Coming we are all assured, then may such a one be anathema. So be it until the end of Time. Amen.